University of Alberta

The Russian Cultural Presence in the Works of Woody Allen

by

Roumiana Deltcheva ©

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Abstract

From the perspective of the comparatist approach, the *oeuvre* of an artist such as Woody Allen offers diverse possibilities for analysis and discussion. His dense individual universe, permeated by his ambivalent attitude of simultaneous embracing and radical rejection of tradition, by playful parody transcending into serious philosophical inquiry, by the oscillation between modernist introspection and post-modern scepticism, validates a broad cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, trans-media approach to the subject. The present dissertation traces the intertextual influences and manifestations of Russian literature, art, and thought on Allen's literary prose and films. The discussion focusses on the various levels of Allen's intertextual evocations of Russian cultural figures and artefacts in the construction of the ideological and formal dimensions of his own subjective artistic world. Specific attention is devoted to a comparison between the philosophical and aesthetic problematics which underscore the classical Russian literary tradition and how these concerns determine Allen's artistic universe.

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The Russian Cultural Presence in the Works of Woody Allen

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INTRODUCTION

Paradox and Intertext: Defining Principles of Woody Allen's Artistic World

> Mr. Allen ... has become not only America's most literate film-maker, but also our most literary one.
> (Vincent Canby, "Woody Allen Tops Himself")

In my dissertation I focus specifically on the intertextual relations and the manifestations of Russian literature, art, and thought in the literary prose and films of Woody Allen. While Allen has been acknowledged as the quintessential American *auteur*, his Americanness emerges through a sophisticated dialogue with the European cultural semiosphere. In the course of this process, he establishes a stable European paradigm, which he applies for his own, individualized creative endeavours. The European layer becomes a primary point of reference against which Allen's commentary on the American cultural situation is foregrounded. At the same time, there is an equally strong centripetal American cultural tradition which historically determines Allen's American essence. The American layer itself presents a complex artistic environment as it must be viewed as a synthesis of American and Jewish humour predicated on Allen's immersion in the uniqueness of the New York subculture.

To one degree or another, every Woody Allen film critic and scholar has identified the European layer in Allen's creative universe: directors such as Alan Resnais, Ingmar Bergman, and Michelangelo Antonioni; philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus; painters such as Emil Nolde and Edvard Munch; playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov; composers such as Felix Mendelssohn and Igor Stravinsky; writers such as Gustave Flaubert, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy, to mention only a few names. A comprehensive survey of the cultural quotations integrated into Allen's literary and cinematic production is an encyclopedic effort in its own right. From his very first essayistic efforts in *The New Yorker* to his most sophisticated films from the last two decades, Allen's own original artistic vision is irrevocably grounded in the Western cultural tradition, thus providing a unique sense of continuity between the individual and the communal. As Eric Lax points out in his authorized biography of Woody Allen,

> Almost everyone associates Woody Allen's childhood with Brooklyn and his films with New York City. But while they are certainly the locale of his routines and stories, and although he is arguably the preeminent chronicler of American metropolitan life and mores in the late twentieth century, his influences are an amalgam of old Europe and New York. (11)

My discussion in the present work will focus on the various levels of Allen's intertextual evocations of Russian cultural figures and artefacts in the construction of the ideological and formal dimensions of his own subjective artistic world. Specific attention will be devoted to a comparison between the philosophical and aesthetic problematics which underscore the classical Russian literary tradition and how these concerns determine Allen's artistic universe.

Compositionally, this dissertation consists of eight chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. In the first chapter, I present some necessary biographical information on Woody Allen. My premise is that to a certain degree Allen's heritage and upbringing have determined his cross-cultural creative sensibility. In that sense, Allen's elusive identity underlies his diversified and evasive creative activity. In the second chapter, I present a review of the literature published on Woody Allen to date. So far, there has not been a full-fledged study devoted to the strong literary and cinematic "Russian presence" in his works. The third chapter is devoted to a description of the overall methodological framework within which I am working. The next five chapters deal with different aspects of Woody Allen's *oeuvre* within the paradigm of Russian culture. In other words, I undertake the task of describing and analyzing what Ellen Chances appropriately calls Woody Allen's "Russian soul." The Conclusion includes a brief summary of my overall discussion in connection to the issue of how Allen's immersion in and dialogue with American and European culture play their part in the emergence of the Woody Allen myth. Finally, at the end of the dissertation I offer a full bibliography of Woody Allen's primary texts — prose, plays, filmography, and discography — as well as an exhaustive listing of the secondary sources focussing on different aspects of the artist.

From the perspective of the comparatist approach, the *oeuvre* of an artist such as Woody Allen offers diverse possibilities for analysis and discussion. His dense individual universe, permeated by his ambivalent attitude of simultaneous compulsive embracing and equally radical rejection of tradition, by playful parody transcending into serious philosophical inquiry, by the oscillation between modernist introspection and post-modern scepticism, highlights the validity of a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, trans-media basis in the humanities. Thus, I hope that the particular choice of my topic, posited within such an open framework, will not only be a contribution to the already considerable Allen scholarship, but will be understood as a manifestation of comparatism in practice in the age of globalization and integration.

CHAPTER I

Woody Allen's Elusive Identity

> "I work as an independent, answerable to no one."
> (Woody Allen, qtd. in Benayoun 165)

Without a doubt Woody Allen is one of the most interesting contemporary American artists. Liked or disliked, revered or scorned, Allen makes headlines. There is as much expectation for his annual WASP — the Woody Allen September Project — as there is fascination with the exclusively sensational news that the tabloids offer regarding his personal life. In the ever-increasing conservatism of American society, Allen continues to thrill, outrage, mystify. Always an enigma and a chameleon, in the course of his career he has been viewed as a comedian of the Chaplin-Keaton tradition, an American erudite with little formal education, a romantic in an age governed by pragmatism and materialism, a neurotic exponent of the (post)modernist sensibility, a sex symbol and a sex maniac, a lovable loser, a triumphant *schlemiel*, a religious sceptic, an angst-ridden existentialist, a child-molester, an immoral man incestuously in love with his girlfriend's adopted daughter, a phoenix rising from the ashes. After more than forty years in showbusiness, Allen still manages to surprise, to puzzle, and to engage. As for Allen himself, he considers himself simply "a small star" who has always had the luxury to be able to do what he wishes and even get paid for it (qtd. in Probst 247-48, 254).

As an artist, he never once has been worried that inspiration may leave him or that he is faced with too much to do. In fact, in the traditionally subdued manner that Allen adopts when discussing his success, the ingredient he highlights the most in defining his career is luck:

> It was luck for me that I became a comedian when nightclubs were around — the Blue Angel, the hungry i, Crystal Palace, Mr. Kelly's. I got to play them in the last wave, when they were meaningful.... A young comedian doesn't have the same opportunity I had.... To this day I can't splice two pieces of film together or thread a Movieola, but Palomar pictures was forming. They happened to like me and they had faith in me and they couldn't attract more significant filmmakers because they were a young, new company. They gave me a break. (248)

It is worth speculating on some of the factors that make Woody Allen such an intriguing artist. His humble beginnings and his rise to fame — in spite of his shyness — probably play a part. Moreover, his life has become a constant source of inspiration at least to some aspects of his films, thus blurring the subtle borderline between reality and illusion, life and art. But, perhaps above all, it is his choice to remain unrestricted and free to pursue his interests without succumbing to the constraints of structure that makes Woody Allen such a curious object of investigation. In other words, Allen's elusive identity becomes a crucial factor which determines his borderline creative persona.

Allen's artistic identity is firmly anchored in the Western cultural tradition. In spite of the lack of formal education or perhaps because of it, his whole life Allen has not only been trying to catch up, but he has been doing all his learning in public, with his audience observing his *Bildung* (see Probst 255). Yet, he does not consider himself exceptional. He is the first to stress his identification with comedians in general:

> It seems all comedians can do a number of things like sleight of hand, photography, or play an instrument. Groucho played the guitar, Jack Benny played the violin like Chaplin, Sid Caesar the saxophone. I play the clarinet and soprano sax. There is a pattern it seems.
>
> (qtd. in Benayoun 159)

This pattern of identification extends to the traditional types of jokes that all of them make and which equally permeate his humour:

> Hope or Chaplin or Groucho or all of them, they're all scuffling to make money or scuffling to get the girl or escaping from some danger. I'm a standard comic that way, absolutely standard. I do one-line jokes like Hope or Henny Youngman, the same kind of jokes every American comedian has always done — womanizing, girl chasing, braggart, frightened, no different from what Charlie Chaplin was doing or Keaton going after the girl or scared of being lost at sea in the boat. We're all out of the same mold.
>
> (Allen, qtd. in Probst 254-55)

At the same time, he subtly introduces the difference: his concerns transcend the generic constraints of broad slapstick or the restrictions of ethnicity, for that matter. His vision is more universal; for him,

> people ... are basically humane and liberal and pro-freedom and pro-life [or] pro-exploitation and thought control, basically fascistically inclined. It has nothing to do with whether you're American, Chinese, Russian. *The boundaries are not geographical.*
>
> (Allen, qtd. in Probst 260; emphasis added)

and more importantly,

> Yes, I was an amusing youngster. Incidentally, people always relate that to being raised Jewish. It's a myth. Many great funnymen were not Jewish: W.C. Fields, Jonathan Winters, Bob Hope, Buster Keaton... *I never saw any connection between ethnicity or religion or race and humor.*
>
> (Allen, qtd. in Kakutani 214; emphasis added)

However, geography *does* matter for Allen. As Shales suggests,

> Woody Allen is a New York provincial (an Upper East Side provincial, actually) who suffers from one of the oldest inferiority complexes in the book, the feeling that Europeans such as his idol Ingmar Bergman grapple with all the deep questions while their American counterparts are a bunch of vulgar softies by comparison. Most sensible people who go through this in college eventually grow out of it. Woody has a terminal case. (88)

While Shales, among many other Allen critics, is right in identifying Allen's acute interest in the cultural artefacts and the serious philosophical concerns that underscore the Western cultural tradition, his quick diagnosis of Allen's "Euro-complex" is probably characterized more by its adherence to the peculiar *Esquire* diction — itself emulating a European model — than on real understanding of Allen's inclinations.

It is true that the European layer is not only present, but crucial for apprehending the words and cinema of Woody Allen. Each of his essays and films is a kind of intertextual bridge which substitutes geographical territorialization. But it would be inaccurate if we fail to identify the equally strong presence of the American cultural tradition in Allen's works. In fact, only by a synthesis of these two complementary cultural forces, can a glimpse into Allen's variegated, open, dynamic artistic universe be achieved.

To a certain degree, Allen's personal background prefigures his artistic duality, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, his artistic multi-facetedness, which is partly responsible for the public's construction of and fascination with the "Woody Allen myth." As was already stressed, Allen is both American and European. As a Jew, he is equally schizophrenic, his Jewishness being both American (New York) and European (Yiddish). Furthermore, within the American context, another relevant distinction is that between the Jewish New Yorker (Brooklyn, Flatbush, or as in Allen's case, the Bronx) and the rest of America.

The self-imposed differentiation between New Yorkers and the rest of the United States is an interesting cultural phenomenon which can be observed beyond the narrower ethnic boundaries. It is a point of fact that by now there is sufficient New York cultural mythology to have given the city a status of a different world. Anecdotally speaking, New Yorkers in Europe often insist on introducing themselves explicitly as "New Yorkers," not "Americans." The concept of being from New York, coming from Manhattan, seems to provide an almost mystical short-cut to the cultural heritage of the Old World.

The specific kind of special status that the New Yorker perceives him or herself to possess serves as a comic point of departure for many of the conflicts in one of the most successful TV series of the 1980's, *Northern Exposure*. The setting of the show is Cicely, Alaska, a small fictional town of about two thousand inhabitants. It was presumably founded by Maurice Minnifield (Barry Corbin), a former US astronaut and a Texas millionaire, who is the embodiment of the American dream and the values of mid-West America. His pragmatic worldview is countered by the value system of Dr. Joel Fleishman (Rob Morrow), a graduate of Columbia University who ends up in Alaska in order to fulfill his obligations to the community that paid for his education. Fleishman's background as a New Yorker is foregrounded by his constant references to Woody Allen, his awareness of his Yiddish — that is, European — heritage, and his incessant repetitions of how his life is being wasted away in that remote, god-forsaken locale. Fleishman himself explicitly states what he misses the most from his life: the Columbia library, the Knicks games, the Broadway theatres, etc. — all of them unambiguous markers of the New Yorker identity. One of his worst nightmares is that he might be losing his New York "edge" and individualism by becoming too nice, over-sensitive, and community-oriented. Fleishman counters these tendencies by invoking New York and its icons. In a direct reference to Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, he declares the film to Ed (Darren E. Burrows), the Native film buff and amateur director, as "probably the best film for 1989." In another episode, the Russian visitor to Alaska, Nikolai Ivanovich Appolonov, visits Cicely and brings Ed "a piece of film history": the yarmulke that belonged to Woody Allen's Russian grandfather. The whole premise of the series is to depict the trials and tribulations of the well-educated New York Jewish intellectual in a hostile American environment: no matter how accepting the community is to him, he cannot acclimatize or accept "the exile."

One of the episodes of *Northern Exposure* is dedicated particularly to the same kind of separation, comically developed on various levels, that is valid for Woody Allen: namely, New World *versus* Old World, New Yorkers *versus* the rest of America, Jews *versus* Gentiles, and finally Jewish New Yorkers *versus* Jewish Americans. The plot concerns the passing away of Joel's uncle. Joel's decision to read a minyan in his uncle's honour requires that he find nine other Jewish men to perform the ritual, a tough proposition in Alaska. The community of Cicely decides to help Joel find his Jews. One by one, Joel is introduced to different representatives of "his people," including a Native who has converted to Judaism. Eventually, however, Joel decides that praying with a group of strangers, even if they belong to the same faith, is not what he needs. When he informs Maurice, who, with his typical pragmatic philosophy, is paying each Jewish male one hundred dollars plus room and board for his participation, of his change of heart, Maurice fires back: "You don't like the Jews I got you? What do you want — New Yorkers?" Maurice's semi-facetious question is logically connected with an earlier scene in the episode. In a dream sequence Joel visualizes his "fellow-Jews" as a group of cowboys wearing a Star of David instead of a Sheriff's star on their chests, who have come to fetch him for the minyan. They all greet him with "Shalom," and at the same time, they are all very different. Yet, they are able to communicate with one another. Joel's outsider status is geographically marked and is highlighted in his dialogic exchange with the leader. When Joel is told to mount the horse, he weakly explains that he cannot ride. The immediate comment from the group is: "It figures. He's a New Yorker."

One is also reminded of the debate between CBS and the citizens of New York whether the David Letterman talk-show should move to Los Angeles. One of the arguments had to do with the artificial Manhattan skyline in the studio's background, perceived as a symbol rather than merely the show's trademark. Letterman, just like Allen, is a New York constant. He, too, transgresses the purely ethnic, Jewish element in his presentation and emphasizes the mystical/mythical exclusivity of New York.

Of course, the discussion cannot be complete without bringing in the hit NBC sitcom of the decade, *Seinfeld.* Not only is the show greatly indebted to Allen's wit and humour, but he even becomes an off-stage participant in one episode, in which Kramer (Michael Richards) gets a line in a Woody Allen film: who can forget the variations that the phrase "These pretzels are making me thirsty" undergoes in the course of thirty minutes. George Costanza (Jason Alexander) has often been described by the media as possessing Allenesque angst and pathological neuroticism. The early reservations against the show were that "it was too New York, too Jewish" (*Dateline*, NBC, May 11, 1998). I would counterargue that while the show may be "too New York" in that it relies on the audience's knowledge of the geography of the locale, it is definitely not "too Jewish"; it is simply too human. In the nine years that the series was aired, it challenged political correctness on all levels, with regard to ethnic, gender, social, political, etc. implication. By putting the characters on trial in the last episode and bringing together all personages that had appeared in the show over the years, with their personal idiosyncrasies and varied backgrounds, the show revealed that, in spite of the ethnic differences, New York unites. The city then becomes a valid metaphor for a microcosm of society.

Allan Stuart Konigsberg was born on 1 December 1935 in the Bronx, New York, to Jewish parents, Nettie Cherry and Martin Konigsberg. While his parents were raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, they both carried a European heritage and sensibility. Nettie's family came from Vienna while

Martin's family had emigrated from Russia. Although the primary language spoken in the household was Yiddish, the Konigsbergs were not particularly religious and instead had a secular cultural predisposition:

> Isaac was more of the modern world than any of Allan Konigsberg's other grandparents. He dressed beautifully. He had a box at the Metropolitan Opera. He was the first Jewish salesman for a coffee company and often sailed to Europe on business. He came to own a fleet of taxicabs and several movie theatres in Brooklyn.... Then, in the stock-market crash of 1929, Isaac lost everything... [and] by the time Allan came to know him Isaac was a poor man....
>
> (Lax, *Woody Allen* 12-13)

It seems that Allen's artistic inclinations come from his father's side of the family. Eric Lax suggests that Isaac was considered a cultured man by his daughter-in-law "because of his opera box" (*Woody Allen* 13). Moreover, he was highly respected within the context of the immigrant community:

> To Jewish families, *and especially to immigrants who clung to Old World ways*, the person of culture and learning was whom they respected: the doctor, the teacher, the rabbi, the lawyer, the violin player; people involved with serious work and not, as Isaac or Nettie would say, someone who wastes time with foolishness.
>
> (*Woody Allen* 13; emphasis added)

This anchoring of Allen's family in the specific East Central European *milieu* known as *Mitteleuropa*, and their apparent insistence to observe the European tradition in its reverence of culture and education, serves as an appropriate starting point for the study of the artistic persona of Woody Allen, if we consider the innumerable European references that emerge on every level of Allen's creativity: from the jokes during his early stand-up routines to the serious philosophical issues he tackles in his films from the eighties and the nineties. On this cross-cultural plane, one of the recurrent, if not the most obvious, lines of intertextual, dialogic exchange in Allen's prose and films is that with the classical Russian literary, artistic, philosophical, and cinematic tradition.

Any attempt at a "definitive" localization of Woody Allen at the present moment will probably prove to be a rather unreliable undertaking. As our contemporary, he is still too close to us for a detached and objective appraisal. From a purely biographical point of view, Allen seems to be undergoing changes from decade to decade. In that sense, some of the serious evaluative essays, especially those about Woody Allen's and Mia Farrow's personal and creative partnership, written at the end of the eighties, sound nothing short of preposterous when read nowadays.

Similarly, another reason for the difficulties regarding a clear-cut positioning of Allen within the canon of American artists, in spite of the recurrent definition of him as "the quintessential American *auteur*" (Canby), is Allen's own conscious choice to be on the margin. One of the features of being on the periphery is the freedom of movement and the possibility of transgressing borders. Allen's constant shifts in modes and his experimentation with both form and content make him very elusive. By refusing to stake a definite place in the context of American "high culture" in spite of the critics' constant attempts — both favourable and unfavourable[1] — to pigeonhole him, Allen performs his own carnivalesque transmutations and thus subverts the monopolizing power of official discourse.

It seems that Woody Allen's entire life can be viewed in terms of ambiguities and a bizarre, almost intentional refusal to establish a stable identity. This elusiveness begins with Allen's name which seems to evade the permanence of denotation. "Woody Allen" was officially adopted in 1952; a year later, in 1953, his "real" name was doubly misspelled in his yearbook as "Alan Konisberg"; a review of the literature on him suggests a total lack of consistency among the different authors: Allan, Alan, Allen all appear in their publications. In addition, Max as another of Woody's preferred appellations recurs both in his personal interactions (notably with Tony Roberts and Mia Farrow) and in his creative endeavours (the name appears in many of his films and essays).

In the early years of Allen's parents' married life, the couple moved to the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. Soon after they settled down, the majority of Nettie's relatives relocated within a five-six block perimeter of the Konigsbergs, "a pattern that continued throughout Allan's childhood and that generally included one aunt or another and her family sharing an apartment with his family" (Lax, *Woody Allen* 14). The situation is vividly and warm-heartedly depicted in Allen's 1985 film *Radio Days*. Among those who frequently shared the Konigsbergs' apartment were his maternal aunt Sadie and her husband, Joe Wishnick (Vishnetski), a tailor who had emigrated from Russia. Joe was an important influence in the course of Allen's childhood. According to Lax,

> Joe was a perfect example of Old World values in a New World setting. He was a dour but likable man who was European in every way, Woody says. "He would sit around and say in a heavy accent, '*This* is not a snowstorm...' and was good at wrestling and things like that. European sports. Couldn't throw a ball to save his life. While he was not cultured at all, he was typically Russian in feeling and had that reverence for the Jewish religion and serious culture."
>
> (*Woody Allen* 44)[2]

While Allen's early years are to a large extent determined by the Old World sensibility, his adolescence is largely defined by American popular culture. He was exposed to comic books, American sports, and jazz. In fact, until he became "attracted to a certain type of woman ... what you'd call a Jules Feiffer type of girl, the kind that appear in his cartoons with long black hair, no makeup, kind of black-clothed, leather-purse-carrying, silver earrings" (Allen, qtd. in Lax, *Woody Allen* 76), Allen had never read a real book in his life. His interest in literature proper was spurred only after he found out that the girls he liked to chase after "were almost invariably wanting to leave Brooklyn and move to Greenwich Village and study art, study music, get into literature — or blow up a building." They, on the other hand, were uninterested in Allen because he "was a lowlife culturally and intellectually" (Lax, *Woody Allen* 76). As Allen himself admits, his physiological needs opened his intellectual horizons:

> I used to take them out and they'd say, "Where I'd really like to go tonight is to hear Andrés Segovia." And I'd say, "Who?" Or they'd say, "Did you read this Faulkner novel?" And I'd say, "I read *comic books*. I've never read a book in my life." And so in order to keep pace, I had to read. And I found I liked what I read.... I found I liked Faulkner and Hemingway, although not Fitzgerald so much. Then I started reading plays. The things those women read and liked led them inevitably to Nietzsche and Trotsky and Beethoven, and I had to struggle to stay alive in that kind of company.
>
> (*Woody Allen* 76; emphasis in the original)

Allen's formal education does not amount to very much. In 1953, he made an attempt to get a degree in motion picture production from New York University. The effort on his part was mainly to please his parents, but he found the courses dull and unsatisfying. At the end of one year, he was thrown out of college for unsatisfactory performance. After this first fiasco, Allen decided to go to the City College of New York in an effort to keep his mother "from opening her wrists" (Lax, *Woody Allen* 79). Yet, according to Allen, the level of instruction there was so poor that he did not manage to last even one term. As Lax succinctly puts it, "At the age of eighteen, he was out of college for good" (*Woody Allen* 81). But while Allen was probably done with his formal education, he was just beginning to uncover and be fascinated by the artefacts of human civilization: artefacts that would be crucial for his future activities.

Contrary to popular belief and the misinformation Allen himself promotes in his stand-up routines and his early ***nebbish*** persona, he was not only a fairly good athlete but he has always been well-informed about sports. Over the years he has been one of the most loyal Knicks fans.[3] In an interview Allen even admits that his dream is to have been born an NBA star. In the same way, Allen uses baseball analogies to clarify his comic philosophical argumentations.

Jazz, too, has always been a very strong presence in Allen's creative activity. He ingeniously intertwines popular jazz tunes both on the formal and the ideological levels of his films. His functional use of music in general is recognized both by Allen fans and scholars. Annette Wernblad, for instance, has the following acknowledgement at the beginning of her book *Brooklyn Is Not Expanding*, where she makes an attempt to capture the Allen persona *in toto*, as a combination of the real man and his fictional creation:

> At the beginning of *Radio Days*, Little Joe says that thanks to his Aunt Bea, he still gets "instant memory flashes" whenever he hears certain tunes. In addition to sometimes giving me an eerie feeling that he knows my most painful personal memories, Woody Allen has opened up a whole new universe of memories by means of his use of music. Thus I will never again be able to hear Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije* without seeing Boris cavorting off with death. When I hear Harry James's *I've Heard That Song Before*, I immediately see Michael Caine running around in SoHo trying to "bump into" Barbara Hershey. I get these instant "memory flashes" whenever I hear *Rhapsody in Blue* or *South American Way* or *On a Slow Boat to China* or Louis Armstrong's recording of *Stardust* or Eric Satie's *Gymnopédies*. Since I started watching Allen's films, I must have bought a hundred new (or actually

> old) records. So to Woody Allen I would very much like to say, thank you for the memories! (11-12).

For many years now, every Monday Allen has been playing the clarinet with a jazz band. This is one of the reasons why Allen is never present at the Academy Awards.[4] Another confirmation about the importance of music to him, in general, and jazz, in particular, is the recently released film, *Wild Man Blues* (1997), directed by Barbara Kopple, which follows Allen and his band on a European jazz tour and deals with this less known side of Allen's creative personality.

During the same time that Allen's intellectual activities were gaining prominence, he was also exposed to the other important source of influence in his life: the Jewish comic tradition. To a certain degree he was lucky to have been able to interact at the very early stages of his career with the talent and experience of individuals such as Sid Caesar and Larry Gelbart, or the producer Max Liebman whose intuition for hot new talents was widely known. In general, by the 1960s Woody Allen was a known prodigy and in considerable demand as a writer for television comedy programmes. Yet, the more popular he became, the less interested he was in working for others. Allen's individualism and independence were beginning to emerge. His last participation as a TV script-writer was the Garry Moore show. By that time, Allen had decided that he would try his luck at stand-up comedy.

While the 1950s can be defined as the decade which formed Woody Allen's skills as a writer, the 1960s witnessed the birth of Allen the performer. In spite of his shyness and the stress prior to and during his nightly routines, Allen's act gradually gained a kind of a cult following. Unlike Mort Sahl or Lenny Bruce's, however, Allen's comedy is not overtly political but more existential. It is inward-oriented and based on his personal experiences, fears, expectations, frustrations, and delusions. Tad Danielewski, a veteran television executive and an Allen supporter, establishes a direct connection between the peculiarities of Allen's creativity and the European cultural space:

> Woody's material was different when it was not constricted by the personality of a great performer and I thought it showed originality.... But some people thought it wasn't funny, that it was a little too serious, or too attenuated, or too fancy, or too naïve. It was always too something.... My dream for Woody was and still is that he would get interested in the power games of this world, because with his freshness and courage he could perhaps illuminate some of those dark corners. Now in retrospect I realize he was not interested in that and he went the other way, the way of Ibsen and Strindberg and Bergman, into the interior world.
>
> (qtd. in Lax, *Woody Allen* 93)

Clearly, a whole set of factors determines Allen's persona as an individual and an artist. The complexity of this multitude of diverse and often counter-directed cultural axes is further enhanced by a clear refusal on the part of the artist to provide definitive answers to queries regarding his creative activity. Perhaps this rejection of definitive answers or single solutions accounts for Allen's notorious reluctance to recognize his "influences." That is not to say that he fails to recognize the achievements of those cultural authorities that are so often invoked in his films and essays. On the contrary, if anything, Allen enjoys playing the humility game of bowing to the masters. Yet, while he is always ready to give credit to the models he clearly respects and emulates, he can be equally dismissive of parallels that critics draw between his works and those of his European predecessors, insisting that the thematic and formal similarities are simply "coincidences." On some occasions he would acknowledge his indebtedness to a particular artist, insisting only on a loose thread of similar topics and interests that unite them. According to Graham McCann, while Allen is ready to admit his admiration for the European masterpieces, he flatly rejects the notion that there are other American artists who deal in problematics similar to his (see *Woody Allen: New Yorker* 136-37).

What is astonishing is that in this highly ritualistic *Spiel*, never does Allen come across as being arrogant or ungrateful. Somehow, he manages to retain his position of a fool who is only too human and too fallible. If we consider Allen's true status with regards to the total and unconditional control he possesses over every one of his projects — a situation in fact that has been in effect since his 1969 *Take the Money and Run* — we may come to the realization that perhaps an uncritical assumption of equivalence between the Allen persona and Allen the person is a naive proposition. In fact, Douglas Brode qualifies Allen as "a control freak, and getting worse all the time" and stresses that Allen is highly aware of "the image of himself as presented through the media" (qtd. in Spignesi 107). In this context, in my opinion Brode is closer to "the truth about Woody Allen" — whatever it may be — than Maurice Yacowar with his effective, but somewhat misleading labelling of Allen as "Loser Takes All."[5]

Allen consistently insists on positing a clear distinction between his real-life personality and experience and that of the characters he portrays. However, it is not difficult to see why audience, critics, and even scholars have tended to draw a sign of equivalence between the two. In his films, Allen likes to cast his close friends. Often he purposefully uses names that have a real-life referent that is in some way connected to the director. In his behaviour, Allen is equally erratic. McCann provides the following inventory of examples: Allen has a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce but he likes to get off from the car a block earlier in order to avoid commotion; he claims that he never reads criticism, but he sends thank-you notes to critics for good reviews; he emphasizes that he has frugal tastes but his apartment is carefully decorated and situated near Central Park; he likes to be alone but dines out every night; he has built his external image specifically on casualware — his clothes never seem to change in any of his films (except, of course, in *Broadway Danny Rose*) — yet it is made by well-known tailors and designers (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 138). The author concludes, "These contradictions are far from crippling, but Allen's silence encourages his critics to portray him as a devious misanthrope" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 141).

Moreover, in spite of his modesty, Allen does crave recognition as a true artist from the domain of "high culture." He has confided to film critic Gene Siskel, "I do have an agenda for myself. I'd like to make a series of great films. I would like to try to overreach myself and challenge the great film-makers" (qtd. in McKnight 190). Allen's agenda, in fact, determines his ambivalent attitude towards the media. Naturally, to achieve his goal and be accepted, he needs the media attention that accompanies the release of each Woody Allen movie. Yet, he is always careful to protect his work from the exploitative side of the publicity process. He personally selects excerpts from his films to be shown on review programmes and the visual aspect of the credits to the films is always subdued and simple — although that particular graphical style has become an Allen symbol and has been emulated in other shows paying tribute to him.[6] He only grants interviews to magazines he regards as "serious." To sum up, "Allen is deeply suspicious of the media and the cult of celebrity; he regards the recent wave of 'celebrity' magazines as a sign of the trivialization of every cultural figure and event" (McCann, *Woody Allen: New Yorker* 141). This idea underlies Allen's latest film to date, *Celebrity* (1998).

In part, his aspirations account for his creative experimentation and his move away from pure comedy — something he acknowledges is natural and effortless for him — to more complex and hybrid genres, including his three serious attempts: *Interiors* (1978), *September* (1987), and *Another Woman* (1988). Brode even goes so far as to claim that Allen "aspires to be a literary artist worthy of such debate, like Bergman, Fellini, or Chekhov (and, at his best, is indeed in their league)" (qtd. in Spignesi 107). It is true that by engaging in his never-ending cultural dialogue with both contemporaries and predecessors, Allen does inscribe himself in the paradigm of high culture. I would suggest, however, that, like everything else that concerns Allen, his relationship with the sphere of high culture is more complex and ambivalent than usually comes forth in critical studies on him. It may be argued that he is at least as subversive as he is respectful of his acknowledged and unacknowledged models. Naturally, the process involves transgression, a characteristic that, as was suggested above, defines Allen's personal and creative identity.

According to Lax,

> If there is a word that sums up Woody Allen, it is survival. In his work ... his character is under constant threat but always manages to triumph over dire consequences and escape, if only into new threats. But temporarily, anyway, he survives. And since survival is ultimately impossible, Woody's fierce determination to achieve it in both artistic and personal terms makes him rather unsentimental but terribly romantic...
>
> (*On Being Funny* 230)

Allen's romanticism is organically linked to his deep humanist values and his ultimate adoption of the maxim to have "a little faith in people" suggested to Isaac (Woody Allen) by Tracy (Mariel Hemingway), one of the most positive and optimistic of all of Allen's characters, in *Manhattan*. These qualities become the pillars of Allen's survival mechanism in the face of adversity, both mundane and existential. They also reflect Allen's ideas about his role as an artist succinctly, effectively, and so appropriately expressed through the words of the Clown (John Malkovich) in *Shadows and Fog*: "We're not like other people. We are artists. With great talent comes responsibility." It is this responsibility that Woody Allen has been fulfilling for almost half a century. Yet, like a true magician, he refuses to provide us with simple straight-forward solutions or didactic slogans. Instead, he lets us enter the labyrinthine passages of his creative universe in search of the humanist spirit of art.

NOTES

[1] What I have in mind here is the paradoxical fact that both Allen's supporters and his detractors have persistently tried to construct him as an American intellectual over the years. Thus, for example, both Vincent Canby and Janet Maslin have expressed their profuse admiration for Allen's erudite cultural references in the content and/or style of his films. Other, less favourably inclined critics, in particular Pauline Kael and Vivian Gornick, have accused Allen of being elitist and purposely disparaging of his audience. It is worth comparing some of the reviews that Allen's *Love and Death* received on the American continent. For Maslin, the film is "Woody's homage to Tolstoy, Kierkegaard, Eisenstein, Groucho Marx, Bob Hope and maybe even Robert Z. Leonard. It looks terrific.... The professional Woody Allen character, compounded of equal parts of optimism and pessimism, leavened by cowardice and a ready access to fractured philosophical jargon and literary allusions, has never before been as completely utilized as he is in *Love and Death*. If Woody's early films had the flavor of his nightclub monologues, this new one suggests the parodies he writes for *The New Yorker* magazine, fully expanded to film form and annotated with movie references" (*New York Times Film Reviews* 11 Jun 1975: 48: 1). Zoglin, on the other hand, entirely misses the point and seems even distraught with the film which he defines as "an almost entirely verbal exercise with disconnected one-liners ... and pointless literary bits like a conversation filled with the titles of Dostoevsky novels" ("Manhattan's Methuselah" 18).

[2] It is worth mentioning in passing that Allen's comment about his uncle's identity seems to reinforce the traditional Russian stereotype of the "natural man." Joe is presented as enjoying wrestling, a sport associated with unmediated manliness, strength, and Russianness. In this context, one is reminded of the American nickname to the legendary Russian wrestling

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champion Alexandr Karelin during the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics. He was dubbed "the Russian bear," and his isolated life in Siberia became the topic for a short made-for-TV bio-sketch on this athlete's life and career. On a mythological level, Alexandrov is the epitome of the Russian identity, especially as refracted by the American sensibility.

[3] The team was in fact incorporated into a scene from *Annie Hall*, which in the end was dropped (see Lax, *On Being Funny*).

[4] Until 1999, the ceremony was always on a Monday night, Allen's music night.

[5] I would like to emphasize that this comment refers only in so far as the title of Yacowar's book is concerned. In terms of its content, this is one of the best scholarly works on Woody Allen as an all-round artist, which I found extremely helpful in my research. From this perspective, Brode's evaluation of the book as being "marred by the author's faulty notion that if one's words are very big, they make the ideas even bigger" (qtd. in Spignesi 107) is simplistic and somewhat malicious. Any field of scholarly inquiry requires a specific arsenal of tools and terminology with which to conduct its investigation. Yacowar merely employs accepted literary and cinematic concepts in his analysis of Allen's films and the construction of the artist's identity.

[6] An instance is a recent episode of the NBC sitcom *Just Shoot Me* which not only enters into a direct dialogical exchange with *Annie Hall* but also features a short-lived romance between the main female character, Maya (Laura San Giacomo), and an Allen look-alike and wanna-be. Naturally, the episode is in black and white, too. Another such tribute is David Frankel's 1995 *Miami Rhapsody*, starring Sarah Jessica Parker as a female version of the Allen persona, who is unable to commit herself to any serious relationship. Even the credits emulate Allen's format: they are simple, in alphabetical order, and the musical score is that of Louis Armstrong singing "Just Like Old Times." What is also notable is the particiaption of Mia Farrow in the film, regarded by critics to have been directly inspired by *Husbands and Wives*.

CHAPTER II

Woody Allen as Subject and Object

> "People are hungry to overanalyze films, even ones like mine that are offered up for laughs.... Critics have a tendency to encourage the things I am able to do well and not to abuse me for the things I obviously can't do well.... I've never really had to deal with venomous criticism, I've never felt that's it's ever been personal."
>
> (Woody Allen, Probst interview 251, 256)

There is some truth in Woody Allen's statement that as a creator he has indeed been very lucky. Even the process of his canonization as a significant contemporary artist began early and has truly proliferated over the years. With over forty books on Allen, numerous scholarly articles and thematic clusters in academic journals devoted primarily to his cinematic production, praising series of reviews at *The New York Times* and a cult following at *Cahiers du cinéma*, several Ph.D. dissertations, and an unceasing interest on the part of the media in his life, we can speak today of a "Woody Allen industry." Even after more than thirty years of artistic creation which has produced over thirty films at a rigorous and rhythmical pace, Allen's new annual project continues to keep the interest of both his audience and his interpreters.

As early as 1975, in his *The Last Laugh: The World of Stand-Up Comics*, Phil Berger devotes a whole section to the comedy of Woody Allen, in particular the existential dimension of his humour. Displaying an acute sense of foreshadowing as to the artist's future development, Berger goes so far as to qualify Allen as "the logical and laughable extension of Herr Kafka himself" (114) at a time when Allen was primarily loved as a slapstick comedian. Together with Eric Lax's 1979 *On Being Funny*, this is one of the earliest secondary sources on the trends in Allen's professional biography.

Albert Bermel's authoritative historical study on farce notably encompasses the period "from Aristophanes to Woody Allen." This recognition by Bermel is important on two levels. On the one hand, Allen's merit as a contemporary comedian is legitimated by the fact that his name has been appropriated to signify a particular historical period in the development of a genre. On the other hand, Bermel's citation of Woody Allen is itself a gesture of canonization, whereby Allen is put in the same semiotic and symbolic space as Aristophanes, Molière, Gogol, Chekhov, etc. Having based his career on comic books and popular culture, Allen miraculously is granted a high culture status. Once again a lucky turn of fate has transformed him into a scholarly object of investigation.

From the point of view of the formal side of his achievements as a film director, Allen is equally fortunate. His films have traditionally been cited as textbook examples of the modernist sensibility and fragmentariness. Avrom Fleishman analyzes one of Allen's most celebrated experimental films, *Zelig* (1981), together with Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1951), as an instance of multiple narration in cinema. With this film Allen successfully implements Bakhtin's theoretical concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia in art, as has been argued not only by Fleishman from a narratological point of view, but also by Ruth Perlmutter and Robert Stam in the framework of cultural studies.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson use *Hannah and Her Sisters* to illustrate the notion of traditional Hollywood narrative style in their introductory textbook *Film Art* and they make use of other examples of Allen's cinematic *oeuvre* to illustrate particular concepts of film art. Paradoxically, in her recent dissertation *Idylls of Manhattan: Film Allegory in* Hannah and Her Sisters, Elizabeth Jane Lee King provides a close reading of *Hannah and Her Sisters* as a post-modern — not modernist — film which consistently violates the norms of classical film narrative. The author's point of departure is the premise that *Hannah and Her Sisters* is "a multivalent film that has not yet received any satisfactory account of its postmodern complexity" (2). She then applies a post-modern allegorical analysis to the film and arrives at the conclusion that the final outcome is not, *pace* Bordwell and Thompson, a sustained linear narrative, but, rather, a constant tension between audience desire and directorial intent, and word and image, resulting in an ultimate post-modernist gesture of "shattering of meaning."

In his study on the Jewish identity, Ivan Kalmar again utilizes the mechanism of naming to evoke a particular socio-cultural layer. His 1994 book is specifically entitled *The Trotskys, Freuds and Woody Allens: Portrait of a Culture*. In his monograph, the author sets out to investigate the characteristics of the "ejis" — the "embarrassed Jewish individuals" — whose main concern, according to Kalmar, who admits to being one of them, is the question of assimilation, integration, and acceptance (see Chapter 1). Kalmar subdivides the different types of ejis in the modern age into three categories defined by the three respective names that appear in the title of his book. The author himself highlights the importance he attributes to the symbolic significance the individuals behind the names have acquired in the course of contemporary culture, politics, and history:

> It is not my intention to write a biography of three people, but rather to speak of different types of eji — the social and political activist *à la* Trotsky; the intellectual *à la* Freud; and the creative artist, writer, or performer, *à la* Woody Allen. (In the case of the last group, the comedian is particularly important as the professional whose job is to purvey images of the Jews for the Gentiles.) (19)

Kalmar's statement is relevant at least on two levels. First, once again, as with Berger and Bermel, Allen's status as a canonized artist is legitimated by the author by the very act of naming him in his title. Moreover, Allen is taken beyond the purely personal dimension of the individual who happens to be a comedian. His name is imbued with a symbolic significance that raises him to some kind of a universal: that of the creative personality who is at the same time the bearer of a particular kind of identity. Second, the symbolic generalization adds a social importance to Allen's role, something which usually has been denied to him by critics. Whether Kalmar is necessarily accurate in defining Allen as an "eji" does not pertain to my discussion. Nor for that matter, do I entirely agree with Kalmar's dichotomy of "intellectual" (Freud) *versus* "creative personality" (Allen), although to some degree such a distinction is suitable to account for Allen's remarkably poor background of formal education.

While certainly doing a lot for the theoretical recognition of Woody Allen, one flaw of the study is the author's premise in discussing Allen's creative activity that there is a single, stable Allen persona, the Jewish *schlemiel*, or, as Kalmar calls him, "Woody the nerd" (238). Yet, Kalmar is by far not the only one to adopt such a monosemic point of view. For example, R.D.V. Glasgow in his recent monograph *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy* (1995) adopts a similar perspective. Using the mask as a central symbol in his investigation as a rough equivalent to character type, or humour in the Jonsonian sense, Glasgow emphasizes the idea that Allen's "angst-ridden, bespectacled mask has ... kept its essential features wherever he has turned up" (35). For both authors, recurrence and stasis are the two elements that combine to build up the persona which is inevitably dominated by a specific trait. According to Glasgow, it is in this emergence of the stereotypical that "a potential for comedy is created" (34). Generally speaking, the analysis of the Allen persona, especially in its connection with the Jewish identity, has become one of the most productive thematic nodes in Allen scholarship.

Allen's legitimation has also been achieved on the level of popular cultural theory. It reached its peak during the early years of the nineties when Allen left his partner for over twelve years, Mia Farrow, after admitting to an affair with her adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn Farrow. The scandal erupted after Farrow's accusations that Allen had molested sexually their young daughter, Dylan. Eventually, the charges were dismissed and recently Allen married Soon-Yi in Venice. Yet, the overwhelming media coverage and the exegetic variations of Allen's behaviour based on the behaviour of his characters suggests that here, more than anywhere else, the blurring of the boundaries between life and art, between private and public, between person and persona is both a fact of theory and of popular reception. For many critics, *Husbands and Wives* (1992) represents Allen's most explicit cinematic enactment of the story of his life. Feminist critics such as Elayne Rapping were outraged by his extremely negative presentation of Judy Roth (Mia Farrow) as the ultimate manipulator in the film. On the other hand, Camille Paglia in "Woody Allen Agonistes" adopts a perspective of equivalence between creator and extraordinary personality, and grants him the right to shock and be forgiven for it: "In giving anguished testimony about the mystery, compulsion, and folly of sexual attraction, he has recovered and renewed his cultural status: the artist as scapegoat, illuminating our lives through his own suffering" (132). Sam Girgus concludes the Preface to his monograph *The Films of Woody Allen* (1992) with the same type of conflation between personal and public in his summation of Woody Allen as a cultural construct:

> It is impossible to predict with certainty what recent events portend for Allen's career and work — or, for that matter, what they will mean for those people, young and old, associated with him. What we can suggest, however, is that media, public, and critical reaction to his "breaking story" has dramatized how important Allen and his films have become to our critical and cultural consciousness. (ix-x)

Since Allen's success as a stand-up comedian and a film director in the 1970s, several biographical accounts of his life have been published. Among the earliest efforts in this direction are Eric Lax' *On Being Funny: Woody Allen and Comedy*, and Bill Adler and Jeffrey Feinman's co-authored *Woody Allen: The Clown Prince of American Humour*, both published in 1975. Lax's book provides a comprehensive look of Allen's early years and is interspersed with numerous quotations from Allen. In addition, it contains the scripts to scenes that were later edited from Allen's early films. Adler and Feinman's monograph abounds in entertaining material and also covers in depth Allen's early years, devoting particular attention to Allen's literary style. In fact, chapter 5 is composed as an instructive manual of Allen's writing technique and the various influences — exclusively American — on Allen's comedic methodology.

To date, there have been published four biographies of Woody Allen: Lee Guthrie's (1978), Eric Lax's (1991), Julian Fox's *Woody: Movies from Manhattan. A Biography* (1996), and most recently John Baxter's account (1998). In spite of its claim to be a scholarly investigation, Guthrie's publication reads more like a personal attack on Allen the individual. The author eclectically explores Allen's diverse artistic pursuits as writer, comedian, director, actor, musician. Structurally, the book is composed of small segments alternating between Guthrie's discourse, Allen's own words, and his jokes, excerpts from essays and scripts, which are differentiated from the rest of the text by the use of italics. Soon after its publication, Allen successfully sued the author and the publisher and had the book recalled from bookstores. Lax's book is the first authorized biography of the artist, containing "over thirty thousand of Woody Allen's words ... and many of his remarks appear here for the first time" (Spignesi 402). The main problem of the book is its almost panegyric quality: since Allen and Lax are close friends, it is quite obvious that, as in his films, Allen was granted total control. As a reference source, however, the publication provides comprehensive material and accurate details about Allen's life and work.

Fox's work can be viewed as a companion piece to Lax's biography. In addition to the fact that it covers Allen's work in the course of this decade, Fox succeeds in presenting an outsider's insight to Allen the artist. While his accessibility to Allen's material is more limited than Lax's, the author constructs Woody Allen's persona as it is refracted through those who collaborated and acted with him. Besides focussing his attention on Allen's life, Fox also provides an in-depth analysis of Allen's films up to *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995). As such, the book is an up-to-date and meticulous look at the production aspects of Allen's movies. Fox discloses how particular effects were created, what kind of camera technique was used, etc. Since Allen has often admitted in interviews that the technical aspects of film-making do not interest him, most of the other books written about the film director usually disregard this component. In addition, Fox's publication contains an abundance of useful data and statistical information regarding the cost and box-office success of Allen's cinematic production. In general, this is a book about Allen as he is seen from the outside, by the others, and through his texts. The filmography at the end of the book is detailed and includes entries on documentaries made about Allen. Whether Fox has managed "fully to interpret" Woody Allen, as the book's dust jacket claims, is difficult to tell, given Allen's unexpected and often arbitrary changes in orientation. However, the author highlights the importance of Europe as a cultural and geographical space for Allen's artistic universe both as a textual presence in his films and as an extra-textual reality, as the place which has ensured the survival of the independent Allen in spite of the shrinking opportunities with respect to budgets, the Hollywood monopoly, and problems of distribution.

Lax's and Fox's biographies are also departures from earlier Allen scholarship which insists on interpreting the writer/director/actor's *oeuvre* exclusively in a homogeneously Jewish context, disregarding the very state of volatility of this context. While the importance of the Jewish comic tradition and the strong Jewish cultural heritage that define Allen should not be ignored, it would be inaccurate to forget the non-Jewish element in Allen's formative and mature years. In fact, it is exactly this "transethnic" and purposely eclectic dimension that have given Allen the current status of a cultural icon.

Baxter's latest biography is interesting because it covers the scandalous events in Allen's life from the 1990s. In a way, it can be seen as the counter-discourse to Lax's authorized version. The major problem with it is the fact that Baxter refuses to see anything positive, sincere, or genuine in Allen's life and career. It appears that his approach to Allen is to condemn him by default. And while his value judgements as far as Allen the man is concerned can be validated, the fact that Baxter does not recognize the artistic merits of any of Allen's works raises the question as to the motivation for writing the biography.

To some degree Gerald McKnight's *Woody Allen: Joking Aside* (1982) is another attempt at an artistic biography of Allen, although the publication mainly focusses on him as an individual and a stand-up comedian, and the people responsible for the creation of the Allen myth. The lack of first-hand knowledge of Allen's creative activity is probably a consequence of the fact that the book was not welcomed by the director. An aspect worth mentioning in McKnight's book is his polemical discussion of Guthrie's earlier "feminist" accusations against Allen, especially his "ascendant male chauvinism" and his inability to relate to adult women ("He's nymphet-related") (qtd. in McKnight 159). McKnight argues that, like Chaplin, Allen uses ridicule as a mechanism of self-defence, his laughter is an act of defiance against the powerful forces of nature and ultimately, an expression of the carnivalesque rather than of misogyny.

Many of Allen's close friends and Allen scholars highlight the director's excessive isolation, shyness, and reluctance to talk. According to Fox, Allen seems arrogant towards those outside his most intimate circle of personal friends. That is why those who have had the opportunity to work closely with him have been quick to produce written testimonies of this connection. Two useful variations on the theme "close encounters with Woody Allen" are Ralph Rosenblum and Robert Karen's 1979 *When the Shooting Stops... The Cutting Begins* and Thierry de Navacelle's 1987 *Woody Allen on Location*. Rosenblum was Allen's editor through *Annie Hall*. The co-authored book provides behind-the-scenes information about the making of *Annie Hall*, Allen's most recognized film to date. De Navacelle's book is a diary of the shooting of *Radio Days* (1987).

There are a number of popular books about Woody Allen. The majority of them can be classified as informative although there is a particular category of publications which go beyond the mere act of providing factual information and can be viewed as instructional guides into Allen's craft. In addition to Adler and

Feinman's *The Clown Prince*, where in chapter 5 they offer a detailed explanatory manual of Allen's prose strategies, there is Mark Altman's entertaining *Woody Allen Encyclopedia* (1992). Besides trivia information — people, places, and things in Allen's films — the book also contains serious and comic informative essays about different aspect of Allen's artistic persona, as well as humourous "sequel" parodies of his films such as *Sleeper 2: Judgement Day, Interiors 2, Return to Manhattan*. There are three Woody Allen quiz books, as well: Graham Flashner's *Fun with Woody: The Complete Woody Allen Quiz Book* and David Wild's *The Movies of Woody Allen: A Short, Neurotic Quiz Book*, both published in 1987, and Frank Weinman's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Woody Allen: The Ultimate Quiz Book* which appeared in 1991. Perhaps the most useful of this type of publications is Stephen Spignesi's 1992 *Woody Allen Companion*. The book is not only an excellent popular explanatory source of Allen's creative world, but it is also the best organized anthology of reference materials about Allen. It includes excerpts of interviews with Allen, conversations about Allen, representative scenes from Allen's early days on television and his routines as a stand-up comic, commentaries on Allen's films, and parodies of the parodist. At the end, there is an exhaustive glossary of Allen's most recurrent cultural references and a short explanation to each one of them. Spignesi also presents a scene-by-scene analysis of Nora Ephron's and Rob Reiner's 1989 film *When Harry Met Sally* as the ultimate Allen tribute, or, as he calls it, "the 'Woody Allen movie' not made by Woody Allen" (343).

Non-Being and Somethingness (1978) is a collection of Stuart Hample's comic strips based on Woody Allen jokes. Myles Palmer's *Woody Allen: An Illustrated Biography* (1980) provides a quick photographic glimpse into Allen's life and career. Neil Sinyard's 1987 *The Films of Woody Allen* is another example of a short and lavishly illustrated coffee-table book with excellent high-quality photographs of Allen as a director and scenes from his films. The author provides a succinct and insightful analysis of Allen's films.

He presents a good overview of Allen as a director contextualizing him against other *cinéastes* from the American and European *milieus*.

Allen, naturally, has been an object of inquiry for European investigators of American culture. That is why it is not surprising that in addition to the English-language publications, there are a number of studies in French, Italian, Spanish, and German that discuss different aspects of Allen's creative activity. Apart from the fact that the French journal *Cahiers du cinéma* follows closely the director's endeavours, three comprehensive studies of the director by Gilles Cèbe (1981), C. Dureau (1985), and Jean-Philippe Guerand (1989) have also appeared. In 1984, Judith Stora-Sandor published *L'humeur juif dans la littérature de Job à Woody Allen*, a historical survey of the characteristics of Jewish humour in literature. While Stora-Sandor's study does not contain a section devoted to aspects of Allen's Jewish humour, she begins her narrative with the introduction of Woody Allen. Moreover, his influential status as a cultural figure is unambiguously highlighted from the very first sentences of her Introduction: "L'humeur juif est devenu à la mode en France ces dernières aneés. C'est grâce au cinéma américain, et avant tout aux films de Woody Allen, que le public français découvrit son existence" (15).[1]

Juan Carlos Rentero's 1979 *Woody Allen* acquaints Spanish-speaking readers with the director's career until *Manhattan*. It is a fairly straight-forward narrative that tries to locate Allen's place as an American *auteur* and to compare him with European directors such as Bergman and Fellini. The majority of the author's discussion is focussed on Allen's admiration for and emulation of the Marx Brothers, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton. Particular attention is paid to a comparison between Allen and Mel Brooks. In fact, the connection Allen—Brooks is often used by scholars of American comedy, as can be attested by the 1980 multi-authored German publication *Woody Allen—Mel Brooks* which includes German, French, and American contributors: Robert Benayoun, Vincent Canby, Peter W. Jansen, Bert Koetter, Christa Maerker, Hans Gunther Pflaum, and Hans Helmut Prinzler.

One of the most interesting popular publications about Woody Allen is Dee Burton's 1982 anthology *I Dream of Woody*. In the book the author, a psychoanalyst, "collected, compiled, analyzed, and annotated people's dreams about Woody Allen, noting especially how a person's dream perception of Woody Allen was due in large part to the latter's public persona" (Spignesi 398). According to the book's findings, the common fixation of the men analyzed is that they want to be Woody Allen, hence he emerges as a larger-than-life hero or, sometimes, villain. As far as women are concerned, they want to be with him. According to McCann, Allen's candour in admitting his insecurities and frustrations plays an important part in this obsession (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 142-42).

Burton's publication is also an "empirical" refutation of the attacks feminist scholars have launched against Allen over the years. I tend to disagree with Paglia's evaluation of Allen as being "one of feminism's great white hopes for the ideal 'sensitive male'" (129). Even the most superficial overview of the feminist-oriented literature suggests a bitter hostility towards this director. The trend begins with Guthrie's early biography. Other critics from a feminist perspective have been Vivian Gornick, Joan Mellen, and Elayne Rapping, among others. The main frustration of these critics and theorists with Allen seems to be the fact that such an ugly, puny, short, bespectacled *schmuck* always ends up getting the beautiful woman. And while the outcry against the Isaac—Tracy relationship in *Manhattan* remained restricted within the domain of fiction and fantasy, the real-life scandal stemming from the affair between Soon-Yi and the director has given all the necessary ammunition for a renewed anti-Allen attack.

The issue at stake here is not that feminist theorists do not have a valid justification. Without a doubt, Allen's relationship with his female partners and his portrayal and treatment of women in his films, essays, plays is anything but unequivocal. The early and irreverent contributions to *Playboy*, the verbal abuse of his first wife, Harlene Rosen, the Pygmalion—Galatea theme in his approach to women, the objectification of the *shiksa* validate a critical examination of the problem "Woody Allen and women." What is disturbing is that none of the feminist-based attacks on Allen are theoretically sustained. The major complaint seems to be that Allen, in spite of his ugly exterior, manages to "get the girl" (see Gornick's caustic complaint). For Guthrie, he is vain and unrealistic in his successful pursuit of beautiful and gorgeous women. Mellen criticizes him along the same lines contradicting her own theoretical postulates in the process. After arguing that Hollywood has enforced entirely arbitrary standards of beauty and ugliness, she then blames *Play It Again, Sam* for sustaining the myth that "the little guy *can* get the most beautiful women too if he learns to feel macho despite his size" (336; emphasis in the original). *I Dream of Woody* seems to confirm that Allen is telling the truth — he will get the girl, or the mature woman for that matter. In this framework, it is a pity that Molly Haskell's study of women's portrayal in film, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (1973), chronologically precedes Allen's more mature cinematic efforts and, in general, does not discuss his approach to women.

Burton's publication is an adequate confirmation of the status of the Allen persona as an autonomous cultural phenomenon. From the scholarly publications on Allen, a significant number are concerned with its emergence, evolution, and identity. Compositionally, most of these monographs follow a chronological principle and look for a correlation between Allen's development as a director and the evolution of his on-screen persona. For most scholars, however, the inception of the persona is to be found in Allen's pre-cinematic days as a stand-up comedian. Such is the approach taken by Diane Jacobs in her 1982 *...but we need the eggs: The Magic of Woody Allen* and Annette Wernblad in her 1992 *Brooklyn Is Not Expanding*. The starting point for both authors is the distinction between Allen the person and Allen the persona. Jacobs includes a third term in her paradigm, "Mr. Allen, the famous man" (3). She provides a close reading not only of Allen's nightclub acts and films up to *Stardust Memories*, but also includes Allen's CBS television special, two of his collection of essays, *Without Feathers* and *Side Effects*, and some of his plays

(*Don't Drink the Water*, *Play It Again, Sam*, and *The Floating Lightbulb*). Wernblad constructs her narrative on the premise of the *schlemiel* as a particular type and investigates the transmutations of the characters in the course of Allen's films.

Wernblad reaches an insightful conclusion regarding Allen's *schlemiel* when she claims that Allen strives towards a "universalizing of the Jewish figure" and hence "in a number of Allen's later films, the resilient and mirth-loving characteristics of the *shlemiel* [sic] have likewise been taken over by non-Jewish characters" (71). This transition is accompanied by a parallel shift in the persona's displacement. In the early films the threat bringing about the displacement is external and allows for a more physical slapstick treatment. In the later film, the threat is internal and calls for a new system of poetics for its expression. In *Woody Allen, Au-delà du langage* (1985), Robert Benayoun also demonstrates a pattern of evolution in the Allen persona with each subsequent film he makes: from the *schlemiel* to the more rounded and self-assured character of his later films. McCann's study *Woody Allen: New Yorker* (1990) devotes a chapter to the emergence of the Allen persona in its relation to the American and the Jewish comic traditions and in the context of Allen's early years as a stand-up comic. This author sees the Allen persona specifically as a manifestation of the anti-hero (see Chapter 2).

Douglas Brode and Nancy Pogel, too, discuss the essence of the Allen persona. They, however, approach it from a more universal perspective. Brode in *Woody Allen: His Films and Career* (1985, rev. and exp. ed. 1991) views Allen as a modern romantic and establishes strong parallels between his characters and those of F. Scott Fitzgerald. For Pogel, Allen's "little men" — whom the author likens to Chaplin's perennial tramp — "make us look anew at the fundamental questions of our existence" (ix). Pogel claims that Allen's "little man" comedy is rooted in the feeling of insecurity at the rapid and irreversible changes in the world. The upset which results from the fear of change causes the "little man" to retreat to a world of fantasy, "of impossible dreams and self-denigrating nightmares" (93). This movement allows him to express the extreme of his hopes and fears in order to exorcise them, to alter them, and eventually to reconcile himself to reality again.

Maurice Yacowar's1979 (exp. ed. 1991) *Loser Takes All: The Comic Art of Woody Allen* represents another comprehensive study of Allen's creative production with insights into the Allen persona. He discusses Allen as a public figure, his role in the theatre, as a writer and director, focussing in particular on the concept of guilt which underlies Allen's works. Moreover, Yacowar pinpoints an important stylistic device that makes the Allen persona so effective, namely the use of confession to express "both true and pretended anxieties" (9). As the author states, "His remarkable success may be due to the intimacy that his audiences have felt with this persona" (9). And although Yacowar in general treats the Allen persona as variation of the *schlemiel*, he definitely sees him in a more complex light, as an individual possessing some explicitly negative qualities, such as arrogance, pretense, and narcissism.

With his *Love, Sex, Death, and the Meaning of Life: Woody Allen's Comedy* (1981, exp. ed. 1990), Foster Hirsch offers yet another appraisal of the Allen persona. The title of the book practically encompasses all major concerns of the individual. Hirsch constructs Allen's image as an artist against a particularly Jewish, urban, modernist milieu. He draws parallels in the verbal style, worldview, and comic stance between Allen, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, and Joseph Heller. Although there is an attempt at a cross-cultural treatment of the artist by references to Tolstoy, Bergman, and Chaplin, Hirsch remains entrenched in a primarily ethnic framework. This approach is even more obvious in the sections where the author praises or criticizes a particular film by Allen depending on what he perceives to be Allen's Jewish pride (the foregrounding of the "smart Jew" who tricks everyone) or self-hatred (hence, the bitter criticism of *Interiors*).

Hirsch and other scholars who discuss the Allen persona, broaden the scope of their analysis by including Allen's directorial efforts. Thus, the Allen persona becomes closely connected with Allen the *auteur*. In the same way that Allen consciously and methodically constructs the image that he wants to disclose to the public, he meticulously plans each detail in every one of his artistic projects. He possesses a tremendous control over the entire process of film production, from beginning to end. Every component is essentially his: the ideas, the story, the screenplay, the direction, the casting of the leading roles, the choice of musical soundtrack, and often the central acting role. As McCann concludes, "It is something of a test-case for *auteurism*: if anyone today gets near to the romantic idea of the 'creative artist,' it is Woody Allen" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 136). At the same time, Allen's approach to the craft of film-making contains a strong polyphonic quality, as well. Brode calls him "the perfect blend of the auteur ... attitude and the collaborative approach in moviemaking" (28). While on the one hand, his "singular sensibility suffuses everything" (28); on the other, he more than anyone is ready to dispense with the script and allow actors to ad-lib, co-authors to add material, and editors to make suggestions.[2]

Brode's book explores Allen as an *auteur*. It covers all of Allen's films from *What's New, Pussycat* to *The Purple Rose of Cairo* with a synopsis and analysis of each film. The author presents a synthesis of both a critical perspective — by providing quotations from reviews of the films and his own commentaries and opinions of these criticisms — and a more scholarly description and interpretation of recurrent themes and philosophical concerns. In addition to his consistent tracing of the development of the Allen persona, Brode offers further, subtler interconnections that establish a network of relations between the different films: characters, events, appellations, linguistic references, cultural innuendoes, etc. Thus, he manages to contextualize Allen as an artist in the framework of American humour and European cinema. Brode not only evokes the precursors who have played a key influence in Allen's formation as a director, but he also traces very clearly the transition from the written to the cinematic in Allen's artistic efforts.

Brode's central idea is based on the premise of the "paradox principle" as the driving force which underscores Woody Allen's creative activity. The paradox principle also establishes the continuity between *auteur* and persona:

> The paradox principle extends from Woody's personality to the basic technique he uses for filmmaking: His best moments, comic or otherwise, are those in which the image and words contradict one another. In his most memorable movie gags — the ones that not only perfectly express his own unique vision of life but also make the most of the sound-film's possibilities for contrapuntal effect — the humour is not in the images or in the words so much as it exists in the relationship of one to the other. (37)

A slightly different variation of the presence of paradox in Allen's artistic universe is presented by Richard Moody in his dissertation *The Paradoxical Flow of Acceptance and Rejection in the Films of Woody Allen* (1994). The author accepts McCann's view of Allen's artistic attitude as an expression of his attempt to attain godlike control over his artistic world, but ties it to the paradox of acceptance and rejection "which is the foundation of all the Allen Persona's struggles" (22). Moody's monograph analyzes three of the director's films — *Annie Hall, Stardust Memories*, and *Zelig* — in order to show Allen's ambivalent attitude of acceptance and rejection manifested on five different axes: towards parents, society, women, deity, and spectators. In general, there is a never-ending oscillation between the desire to belong to the mainstream, to be accepted, and at the same time, a deeply ingrained inferiority complex that makes him an eternal outsider. The outcome is the alienation of the Allen persona and an almost imposed state of solitude. However, in his thesis, Moody sometimes draws a sign of equivalence between Allen as a real individual and as a screen persona. In some instances, he does not distinguish between Allen's directorial strategies and his on-screen actions. Thus, it becomes unclear who oscillates between acceptance and rejection — the creator or the creation:

> ...through use of such self-reflexive devices as audience address and voice-over narration, along with extensive use of subjective camera techniques, Allen invites the spectators to join the Allen Persona in experiencing "life" in the film. However, efforts at such intimacy are countered by Allen's tendency to suddenly "jettison" the viewer from the subjective to the objective mode, both jolting the spectator to awareness of the film experience and simulating the feelings of acceptance and rejection the Allen Persona is experiencing within the films.... Since Allen has admitted — at least through his Allen Persona — that art allows one to correct and perfect life, the presumption is that Allen is attempting to do so — at least figuratively — in his films. However, Allen's adoption of a negative and inferior screen persona renders such perfection impossible. As both character and as film artist he expresses the desire for acceptance yet purposely sabotages these efforts — via his alter ego persona — for fear of "death" or "absorption." (16, 19-20)

The lengthy quotation above also foregrounds a crucial characteristic of Allen's creative production, namely its self-reflexive quality. From the flashing of the phrase "Author's message" in his very first effort as a script writer, *What's New, Pussycat* (1965), to the appearance of Marshall McLuhan on the screen to deflate pretentious fictional characters in *Annie Hall* (1977) to the magical self-annihilation — and salvation — of the protagonist in *Shadows and Fog* (1991), Allen never gives up on his variations of "laying bare the device" (Shklovsky). On one level, this self-reflexivity can be viewed as a defining trait of the (post)modernist poetics to which Allen belongs. On another level, however, it emerges as a legitimate concern which the author addresses in every one of his films. And for many critics, *Zelig* is Allen's quintessential effort in visualizing it. Self-reflexivity as an issue in Allen's films can be found both in the more popular publications and in more academic studies, such as Pogel's and Girgus's monographs. Pogel's focuses specifically on the question how

Allen integrates culture, ideology, mass media with psychological and metaphysical concerns in his films, how he continually questions the limits of fabulation and realism, illusionism and anti-illusionism.

For Girgus, Allen carefully creates films that achieve a balanced integration between serious and comedic, between darkness and light. In his detailed, shot-by-shot discussions of the director's films, Girgus attempts to show how they become "both a visual text and a literary text, and integrated cinetext of visual and verbal images and signs" (6). Moreover, Girgus is perhaps the only Allen scholar who unequivocally states that Allen and contemporary critical theory should not necessarily be placed in oxymoronic juxtaposition. On the contrary, contemporary critical theory can be used successfully to illuminate a number of Allen's artistic choices:

> It seems to me that Allen and much of contemporary critical theory should work well together because he concentrates so intensely on the place and situation of women, the role of psychoanalysis, and the social construction of art forms. Considering some of the insights of theory caused me to think in new ways about much of Allen's work: his use of the camera to reverse the traditional pattern of making women the object of desire in cinema; his development of narrative to dramatize desire and the working of the unconscious; the separation of the elements of cinema such as sight and sound to create interesting psychological conditions; his complex rendering of the continual fragmentation of subjectivity and identity; his visual presentation of situations of psychic, social, and linguistic alienation and separation; his self-conscious direction and cinematography that force the viewer to think about the film process itself and the viewer's own subjectivity within it. (7-8)

The self-reflexive quality in Allen's films evokes one of the principal themes that strikes through his entire creative activity: the relationship between life and art. Jacobs identifies the central dramatic conflict in Allen's art to be the clash between reality ("life as it is") and magic ("life as one's ... mind and imagination can transform it") (5-6). Reality brings all the gloomy things that confront Allen's protagonist. One of the frequent ways to overcome the hardships by life is through magic. Like Bergman, Allen is fascinated with magic. It is one of the most evident motifs in his plays and films, and it is present to some degree everywhere in his *oeuvre*: from *Don't Drink the Water* (1969) to *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* (1980) and *The Floating Lightbulb* (1981), *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), *Shadows and Fog*, and *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996). For Allen, Jacobs claims,

> Magic ... is life's loophole, its escape valve, the sleight of hand ... which turns reality into something funnier, lovelier, less painful, or at the very least different. Magic is the literal legerdemain of Father Drobney in Allen's first play ["Don't Drink the Water"] and of the child magician Paul in his latest ["The Floating Lightbulb"]. But it is also Woody's daydream in the club monologues, Renata's art in *Interiors*, and the romantic love which descends from the heavens and releases almost every Woody Allen protagonist from the miseries of modern existence for a little while. (5)

Some scholars, however, refuse to accept such an exclusive preference for a resolution in art. Arguing with Jacobs, Wernblad points out:

> But although Allen's persona ... sees his dreams as preferable to reality, it is a misconception to assume that Allen himself shares this view.... In fact, Allen's moral — and he *is* a moralist — is usually the very opposite of what Jacobs suggest. Thus, Father Drobney, like most of the other "magicians" in Allen's work, is a failure; his magic does *not* work. Likewise the comic basis of many of Allen's other characters is that they are so absorbed in and blinded by their fantasies that they

> cannot distinguish between dream and reality and are incapable of living a dignified life. (28-29; emphasis in the original)

While it is true that Allen explores the tension between "an impossible dream and a frustrating reality" (Yacowar 208) and uses art to "correct" life and to transform it (Moody), his creative endeavours also relate to the idea that "art and life are continuous, mutually feeding forces" (Yacowar 177). Art, for Allen, represents the ultimate attempt of humans to overcome mortality (see also Yacowar 184-93). This one concern that Allen has — to evade death at all cost — determines the serious existential dimension that scholars have noted in his works.

Most secondary literature on Allen devotes some attention to recurrent "Allenesque" themes and motifs in his creative production. Brode explicates the symbolism of food in Allen's films, and how the concept relates to love/sex and death. According to the author, the three notions are the pillars of Woody Allen's artistic paradigm. McCann discusses the same issues in "The Bluebird of Anxiety," chapter 3 of his book on Allen (43-80), though his analysis is clearly indebted to Brode's.

Benayoun directs his attention on the duality of Allen as actor and director. He traces the emergence of Allen as one of the most important American *auteurs* and contextualizes him against such film-makers as Fellini, Bergman, and Antonioni in his unceasing attempts to explore and challenge the limits of the medium while engaging in important social, moral, and philosophical themes. In the Introduction to the English edition, the translator Alexander Walker praises Benayoun's intertextual approach to Allen and his examination of the European influences beyond Bergman and Antonioni, to more subtle evocations such as painters Edvard Munch and Emil Nolde. However, Benayoun remains entirely within the Western centre of the European centre/periphery cultural situation and does not devote any discussion to Russian culture as part of Allen's European indebtedness.

Pogel's book also approaches Allen's film career from an intertextual framework. For the author, every cultural reference Allen makes is more than a mere casual in-joke, but rather, it is integral "to understanding Allen's contemporary critical sensibility, his techniques and effects" (vii). Pogel adopts a Bakhtinian methodology, since Bakhtin's discussion of intertextuality and the dialogic imagination provide the appropriate basis for Allen's ambiguous, inconclusive films. Bakhtin's views of the carnivalesque are applied to *Broadway Danny Rose* and *The Purple Rose of Cairo*.

Yacowar analyzes the structure and themes of Allen's jokes and establishes connections between them and the major themes advanced in his works (3-5). Yacowar, Brode, McCann, Pogel, Benayoun, Girgus, etc., all to one degree or another suggest that Allen's world is predicated above all on the word. Benayoun, who considers that Allen's films are "made for the bookshelves" (15), formulates this peculiarity in the following manner:

> He has, in short, created a universe dominated by "the word" — yet one which extends beyond the frontiers of language. This is the province of the New Comic, a man born into the era of mass media. There the power of his vision and the evidence of the talent behind it, incorporated either in the person of the entertainer or his fantasies, operate on us at a more profound level of consciousness. It spells the final end of the era of slapstick, once the universally acknowledged idiom. The philosopher-joker, the wit or the humourist — call him as you will — signals the abandonment, in part at least, of comedy which springs from mime and action. He is a post-Marxist accession to power — post-Groucho Marxist, at any rate — which liquidates the century's capital reserves of pure imagery. (*The Films of Woody Allen* 10)

The author further states that Allen is perhaps the only comic in the history of film whose dialogue with all its nuances *needs* to be heard in the original English.[3] Benayoun also shows how gradually Allen gives up the individual and effective yet fragmentary one-liners and *non-sequiturs* to explore deeper and more serious philosophical issues of the human predicament.

Allen's stylistic evolution is accompanied by a parallel thematic shift. His earlier slapstick comedy gradually is subsumed by a darker vision which is encountered both on the level of his films (*Interiors*, *Stardust Memories*, *September*, *Another Woman*, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Shadows and Fog*) and his plays ("The Floating Lightbulb," "Central Park West"). With Allen's greater sophistication as a writer and film director, his films become denser in their content. Allen's films from the 1980s and 1990s manifest an acute concern with philosophical issues such as God, the meaning of existence, the possibility for a meaningful relationship between men and women, the essence of desire, the sense of guilt, individual freedom and responsibility. While this existential dimension is the Allen trademark as early as his stand-up comedy days and can be found in all his films, there is a definite change of vision which correlates with the artist's maturing. It has been suggested that with time Allen has become darker and more bitter both in his treatment of the relationship among humans and the relationship between the individual and the universe. There is a significant difference between the overall light-hearted parodic theorizing on God, love, death, and guilt in *Love and Death* and the much more serious overtones that reverberate through *Stardust Memories* (1980) and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989).

This change in Allen's creative vision has been reflected in the secondary literature on the artist, as well. For many film critics, the director's transition from the early days of zany comedy to more somber drama and darker comedies is a negative change of orientation. As Moody states,

> While most critics praised *Annie Hall* (1977) and Allen's previous comedies for their intellectual blending of serio-comic elements, *Interiors* (1978) and the subsequent *September* (1987) and *Another Woman* (1988) were panned as obvious and heavy-handed efforts. (22)

With time these initial overtly negative assessments have undergone revisionist attitudes. Thus, in a 1986 article entitled "A Portrait of the Artist as a Neurotic: Studies in Interior Distancing in the Films of Woody Allen," Ronald S. Librach offers a post-structuralist reading of Allen's serious films and suggests that they have been misunderstood by the critical community. For the scholar, these films may be structured as sombre dramas on the surface, but in fact they are films of comic irony in disguise, and as such, they are serious in tone but are parodic in construction. A similar revisionist gesture was expressed by Canadian arts critic David Gilmour in regards to the video re-release of Allen's *Stardust Memories*. Commenting on the film, Gilmour stated that from the distance of time this film is much more powerful and effective than when originally viewed.[4]

In this context, a publication entitled *Woody Allen: Profane and Sacred* (1995) by Richard A. Blake, a Jesuit priest teaching film and journalism at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, deserves mention. Blake concentrates exclusively on Allen's "serious" films where the issues of God and religion find their most explicit treatment and approaches them from the comparative perspective of Catholicism *versus* Judaism. The main problem with the monograph is that it insists on channelling Allen's philosophical and religious concerns within the framework of Judaism and it refuses to grant a more universal, humanist level to the problematics.

A much more adequate treatment of the existential and philosophical layer in Allen's films is found in Sander H. Lee's 1997 *Woody Allen's Angst: Philosophical Commentaries on His Serious Films*. The book covers Allen's film career up to *Mighty Aphrodite*. The author's approach, unlike most of the other publications on Allen, has a philosophical bend: it specifically associates Allen with existential philosophy and the concepts related to it. Moreover, Lee often contextualizes Allen's *oeuvre* with other American and European films, thus highlighting the cross-cultural continuity of his problematics. As the book is written by a philosopher, rather than a film specialist, it is much less constrained by long established general truths about Allen. This detached perspective puts the author in the vantage position of Lotman's "observer and describer of culture" ("Theses Towards a Semiotics of Russian Culture" 227) who is able, due to his greater objectivity, to uncover novel elements in the works analyzed. The book's main shortcoming is that at times Lee projects on Allen his own ethical and ideological beliefs, without providing convincing textual support for his claims. Lee transforms Allen into a crusader of morality and faith, a somewhat one-dimensional and static stance that contradicts Allen's multidirectional, ambiguous, and open-ended cinematic production.

At the end of 1998, yet another publications on Allen appeared: Mary Nichols's *Reconstructing Woody: Art, Love, and Life in the Films of Woody Allen*. This most recent study provides commentaries of Allen's films from *Play It Again, Sam* to *Deconstructing Harry*. The book views Allen from the prism of philosophy and investigates his concern with human morality and our efforts to attain a harmonious state of beauty, goodness, and truth. For Nichols, the path to virtue necessarily involves a reconciliation between art and life.

While this survey confirms the scholarly and critical interest that Allen has generated as a comic and a film director, less attention has been paid to his earlier attempts in prose. This fact contradicts the theoretical views of many Allen scholars who highlight the importance of language and the word in his creative activity. Moreover, in the Kakutani interview, Allen himself draws attention to the importance of the writer in him (see 205-10). The appeal of the written form for him is determined not only by the higher degree of control a writer possesses over his/her product. For Allen, writing — especially the novelistic genre — seems to be a project he can always look forward to:

> So the impulse seems always to be a novelist. It's a very desirable thing.... It's a very seductive life. Actually, I wrote a first draft of a novel in Paris when I was doing *Love and Death*. I have it at home, all handwritten, lying in my drawer on graph paper — I've had it that way for years. I've sort of been saving it for when I'm energyless and not able to film any more.... It's a good thing to look forward to a novel.... I've thought at times of taking the idea and making it into a play or a

> film, but oddly it doesn't work that way. If it works at all, it's a novel. It happens in the prose.
>
> (Allen, qtd. in Kakutani 206-07)

While most Allen scholars do mention in passing his essays published in a variety of literary and entertainment magazines and gathered in three collections, *Getting Even* (1971), *Without Feathers* (1975), and *Side Effects* (1980), this aspect of the artist has generally been less investigated. In her book, Jacobs includes a discussion of each collection but defines Allen's writing activity as a "fruitful, if peripheral, career" (26). Wernblad briefly analyzes Allen's short stories taking into account the transmutations of the *schlemiel* in them. Yacowar also deals with Allen's essays in Part Three of his book, "Woody the Writer," and acknowledges that "his short prose works would entitle him to consideration as a major American humorist" (73). Hirsch sees in Allen's writing skills "an astute literary parodist" (212). A number of articles contextualize Allen's prose within the American comic tradition and especially against the background of S.J. Perelman and Robert Benchley, two authors than Allen not only deeply admires but also acknowledges as his models.[5]

A more comprehensive attempt at describing Allen's evolution as a writer is Bobbie J. Speck's 1991 dissertation *Woody Allen: The Philosophical Clown*. Speck's research deals with Allen's three collections of stories. She focusses specifically on Allen's development as a comedian and the major themes that define his prose. Speck's theoretical premise is that through humour and laughter Allen deals with serious philosophical and sociological issues. According to the author, the main vehicle for the treatment of these problems is satire. The main weakness of Speck's dissertation is that it entirely disregards the larger cultural context against which Allen should be viewed. Apart from some parallels with Benchley and Perelman, she does not establish any intertextual links either with other literary works or with philosophical sources. Moreover, Allen's powerful parodic bend in many of his short stories — be that to emulate or mock literary or scholarly/philosophical discourses — are entirely ignored by the work.

The brief bibliographical overview presented above suggests that with his versatility, originality, and eccentricity Allen is certainly a popular topic of investigation. Different authors have cast light on different aspect of his creative personality. And while each of the works discussed focusses on particular qualities of the artist and his art, certain universal notions emerge in every publication as if to construct "the Allen archetype": his existential concerns, his cultural awareness, his fascination with magic, his highly intertextual, open-ended dialogue with predecessors and contemporaries, his unceasing vow to vanquish death, succinctly formulated by his maxim: "I don't want to gain immortality in my works. I want to gain it by not dying" (Allen, qtd. in Benayoun 10).

In the previous chapter I suggested that the spatio-temporal parameters of Allen's unique and multivoiced semiosphere can be found at the intersection of Europe and America, where Allen's inbetween identity can find its fullest realization. And while a number of scholars have approached this issue from different perspectives and methodologies, and subsequently have established the stable points of Europe and America, less attention has been dedicated to an investigation of Allen's *oeuvre* within the paradigm of Russian culture.

In this sense, Lax's biography is a welcome exception because it anchors Allen's artistic endeavours in a European and Russian context. In fact, among the various secondary materials that deal with Allen, Lax's monograph is perhaps the only one that gives full credit to the geographical and cultural space of Russia and East Central Europe in the creation of Allen's artistic personality.

Fox is another Allen scholar who grasps the importance that European and Russian culture, in particular, plays in Allen's artistic universe. Fox's analysis, however, intended as a comprehensive approach to Allen's world, touches only briefly upon some more obvious Russian references and is anything but exhaustive.

Hirsch's sketch of the artist's evolution does relate Allen to Tolstoy, Bergman, and Chaplin, and highlights the importance of intertextuality for the construction of Allen's world. However, the author does not delve into in-depth descriptions of how Allen establishes his cross-cultural connections. Similarly, Brode's and McCann's analyses of food, love, and death, especially the food-sex continuum, is potentially conducive to establishing a thematic kinship between Allen and Gogol.[6]

Of the works with a focus on Allen's intertextuality and dialogism, Pogel's probably demonstrates the highest awareness of the Russian layer. In addition to adopting a Bakhtinian framework to her discussion, she draws attention to some obvious Russian influences such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and even Berdiaev in Allen's work. Surprisingly, however, the author disregards altogether the strong Chekhovian quality in films such as *Interiors* or *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*. Benayoun, for that matter, entirely ignores the Russian echoes in Allen's work, although he does provide useful insights with regards to the incorporation of some less obvious European cultural artefacts. McCann, on the other hand, does consider briefly how Allen uses authors such as Tolstoy and Chekhov.

In his discussion of the Allen persona, Yacowar pinpoints an important stylistic device that makes him so effective, namely the use of confession to express "both true and pretended anxieties" (9). His observations of Allen's personal style subtly foreground Allen's relatedness to a mode of expression that is a dominant characteristic of Russian literature. Moreover, Yacowar's treatment of the Allen persona from a more universal perspective, beyond the more narrow ethnic concept of the *schlemiel*, suggests that it is possible to analyze him in the framework of "the superfluous man." This is a recurrent thematic concern of Russian literature which can be posited with regard to Allen's characters, as well.

The two scholarly studies that deal with Allen's existential and religious problematics are also deficient of an in-depth treatment of how the director argues with the philosophies and religious concerns of Dostoevsky and

Tolstoy. Blake's book is ultimately lacking since Allen's ideological debate on God, existence, guilt, and responsibility which he engages in with Tolstoy and Dostoevsky is either intentionally evaded or escapes the author. Lee's focus, too, is more oriented towards Kierkegaard and Sartre than Dostoevsky.

As can be deduced from these comments, to date there has not been a full-fledged study devoted to the strong Russian presence in Allens literary and cinematic works. To my knowledge, only one article focuses overtly on this topic, namely Ellen Chances's 1992 "Moscow Meets Manhattan: The Russian Soul of Woody Allen's Films." While the author provides a number of examples describing the Russian intertextual layer in the essays and films of Woody Allen, the article is no more than a brief sketch of Allen's "appreciation of Russian culture" (67).[7] It should be pointed out that Chances herself acknowledges that she is just presenting a "general overview of Allen's career in the hope that subsequent research on his connections with Russian literature will focus on specific aspects of the work" (67). Apart from this more explicit, however sketchy, discussion on the Russian connection, it remains altogether peripheral to the primary interests of the Woody Allen industry. That is why it is my intention in the following chapters to explore how Allen interprets, appropriates, and polemicizes — ideologically and poetically — the models from Russian culture, in an attempt to contribute to a fuller understanding of Woody Allen as a cultural phenomenon.

NOTES

[1] Apart from that first introduction, Allen's appears only three times in the entire 350-page survey. The author reproduces one of Allen's rabbi jokes in order to analyze it stylistically and she mentions the split-screen encounter between Annie's and Alvy's parents in *Annie Hall* with the intradiegetic narrator's specification that the two are like "oil and water." The third time Allen

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is mentioned is through a quote used by the author for an epigraph to one of her chapters. Thus, her intentional incorporation of Allen in the title should be viewed as a representative marker of Allen's contemporary symbolic significance.

[2] Rosenbaum, too, attests to Allen's open-minded attitude in *When the Shooting Stops*. In fact, when reading the book one is left with the impression that Rosenbaum had a greater role in the development of *Annie Hall* than either Allen or Marshall Brickman, the two script-writers.

[3] Incidentally, the same view finds dramatic expression in Norman Jewison's 1994 romantic comedy *Only You*. There, the character played by Robert Downey, Jr. explains to his love interest (Marisa Tomei) why he is bothering her so late at night in the following manner: "I went to see a movie. But in my opinion Woody Allen is not funny when he's dubbed in Italian."

[4] The commentary was aired on television on the CBC programme "On the Arts" in May 1997, at the time hosted by Gilmour.

[5] As a representative selection of articles dealing particularly with Allen's themes and style as a prose writer, see Karen C. Blansfield's "Woody Allen and the Comic Tradition in America," J. Madison Davis's "The Literary Skills of Woody Allen," Robert Murray Davis's "A Stand Up Guy Sits Down: Woody Allen's Prose," Sanford Pinkser's "Comedy and Cultural Timing: The Lessons of Robert Benchley and Woody Allen" and "Woody Allen's Lovably Anxious Schlemiels," Marc S. Reisch's "Woody Allen: American Prose Humorist."

[6] A connection between food, sex, and death in Gogol is proposed by Simon Karlinsky in his monograph *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol.*

[7] There are some articles, however, that represent comparative analyses of particular Allen works and relevant Russian literary texts (see specifically, Stenberg and Velhues).

CHAPTER III
Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies

> **Rather than developing the traditional view of this Russian-language Jewish writer as the ethnically, linguistically, and psychologically exotic author of *Red Cavalry* and *Tales of Odessa*, the book foregrounds Babel the consummate intertextualist. (Alexander Zholkovsky, *Babel / Babel'* 145)**

I. Finding a Compromise

The choice of the quotation from Alexander Zholkovsky as my epigraph is not accidental. From the onset of this work, I have been stressing the fact that I want to approach Woody Allen from a dialogic perspective. By this formulation, I mean that the primary aim of my analysis is to investigate how through his works the artist engages in a cultural dialogue with other artists and artefacts that belong to the cultural semiosphere of what has traditionally been designated as Western civilization. My specific focus is the Russian cultural layer. Zholkovsky adopts a similar approach not only to his investigation of the Russian writer Isaac Babel,[1] but also in numerous articles devoted to a variety of representatives of the Russian cultural tradition.

However, a second reason underlies the beginning of my theoretical discussion with Zholkovsky. Namely, my choice has been prompted by Zholkovsky's theoretical reorientation regarding his understanding of the practice of literary studies as a meeting-ground between structuralism and post-structuralism in an integrationist, non-hostile fashion, clearly stated in his 1994 book *Text Counter Text*. In fact, Zholkovsky devotes the introductory chapter of *Text Counter Text* particularly to the clarification of the evolution of his "gradual shift from hard-core generativism to a moderate version of poststructuralism" (v). He draws a parallel between the American context —

that is, a context implicitly devoid of the stability that characterizes Zholkovsky's stable positioning in the earlier Moscow-Tartu School period, both on a personal and a theoretical level — in which he has been immersed for the past decades and the relativistic plurality of readings that define his current understanding of "doing" critical readings. As a Russian scholar working in the North American academic landscape, with *Text Counter Text* Zholkovsky makes it clear that "adaptation, after all, [is] the stuff émigrés are made on" (2). My choice of this approach to textual analysis — be it literary, cinematic, or the intersection of both — is dictated by my conviction that our (post-modernist?) sensibility is defined by a fluidity of concepts and a dissolution of the boundaries which questions neatly formulated definitions and the strict delineation of individual humanitarian disciplines. And our oscillation between deconstruction and constructivism becomes the theoretical parabola of our intellectual games.

The state of inbetweenness which determines Zholkovsky's evolution towards post-structuralism without necessarily discarding the positive achievements of the previous epochs is also reflected in his equally relativistic and open-ended understanding of intertextuality. The ambivalence of the term is purposely retained, structuralist and post-structuralist concepts mesh, to allow for a broadness that I find beneficial to use as a starting point in my discussion, as well. Moreover, Zholkovsky explicitly connects intertextuality to thematics, in spite of the doubt cast on the validity of the latter by post-structuralist thought. While he clearly states his intention to depart from his older practices of "relating 'texts' to purportedly nontextual, because properly desiccated, 'themes'" (2), he, nevertheless, emphasizes the usefulness of themes: "intertextual counterpoints," highlights Zholkovsky, "often have to be formulated in thematic terms" (3). Throughout the chapter, the author is consistently and methodically in pursuit of a compromise, the golden mean that strives for mediation and acceptance rather than confrontation and exclusivity. The gesture extends to the traditionally binary opposition of poetics *versus* politics. As the author himself admits, his analyses "try to combine probing with accuracy, ideological interest and perspectivism with structural completeness, integrative thematization with pluralistic reading" (4).

Although my focus is more restricted, I want to adopt Zholkovsky's "democratic" approach to the text in its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations with other texts. Following his open theoretical model, I want to explore the dialogical relations Allen's "grand narrative" engages in, both structurally and ideologically, with the Russian layer. For the purpose, the intertextual dimension will be examined from a variety of perspectives, based on a variety of theoretical postulates that will be presented below. In the end, the result is inevitably a certain polyphonic quality, arising from, in addition to the hybridity of theoretical frameworks, "the dual nature of writing in English about Russian literature" (Zholkovsky, *Text Counter Text* 2). In my case, the fact that Woody Allen is the object of my investigation further complicates the matter. It is clear that the potentially mixed audience of Slavists, comparatists, and film scholars will bring in yet additional layers of intertextual relations to be explored and accounted for. That is why Zholkovsky as the consummate mediator provides a suitable frame within which I anchor my methodological approach.

II. The Intertextual Dominant

Already in Chapter 1 I suggested that "Western civilization" is to some degree a misnomer with respect to its implied homogeneous character. A closer study of the field demonstrates that within European culture we can identify a clear centre-periphery situation which is predicated on extracultural — geographical, socio-political, and economic — factors. In addition, the North American context enters into the paradigm with its own implications of subversive, decanonizing activity. For the purposes of my study, however, I find the generic heading of "Western" appropriate, since Allen's artistic identity emerges against this vast, multilayered semiotic construct.

To put it differently, the object of my investigation is the identification of the various types of relations that exist between Allen's texts — literary, dramatic, and cinematic — and particular texts that in some sense are foundational for the Russian cultural tradition. The accepted term for these kinds of connections in contemporary scholarship is intertextuality. Essentially, intertextuality represents the transgression of the boundaries of the single text. As a methodological approach it goes beyond the closed borders of the text and the relations *within* it and situates the text in a larger context where the relations *between* texts are foregrounded.

As a term, intertextuality was developed by literary theorists and initially was applied exclusively to literary texts belonging to the established canon. While the term itself is relatively new and is connected particularly with the name of Julia Kristeva, who is credited for its coinage, the interest in establishing parallels between texts by different authors from different cultural backgrounds has had a long history. In the earlier periods of literary theory, this type of textual studies across literary traditions were designated as "influence studies" and were generally considered to be of lesser value in uncovering what the Russian Formalists considered to be the intrinsic literariness of a work. Nowadays, within "la condition postmoderne" the object of poetics is no longer the intrinsic, "closed" reading of the text "but its textual transcendence, its textual links with other texts" (Prince ix). Moreover, at a time of border dissolution and democratization of institutionalized disciplines, "textual transcendence" itself acquires a much broader definition. The shift of criteria towards the ideological and the functional has raised questions pertaining to a reevaluation of concepts such as "literature" and "the canon." The emergence of new disciplines, such as film and media studies, for instance, and their legitimization in the university curricula has enhanced the very definition of text. Literary texts now enter in a complex network of relations not only with other literary texts but also with cinematic texts and hypertexts. The relations are neither linear nor simple. But this ambivalence and complexity makes them all the more interesting to study.

In her 1985 survey of various theories of intertextuality, Morgan sums up the attractiveness of intertextuality as follows:

> As a structural analysis of texts in relation to the larger system of signifying practices or uses of signs in culture, intertextuality seems by definition to deliver us from old controversies over the psychology of individual authors and readers, the tracing of literary origins, and the relative value of imitation or originality. By shifting our attention from the triangle author/work/tradition to that of text/discourse/culture, intertextuality replaces the evolutionary model of literary history with a structural or synchronic model of literature as a sign system. The most salient effect of this strategic change is to free the literary text from psychological, sociological, and historical determinisms, opening it up to an apparently infinite play of relationships with other texts, or semiosis. (1-2)

Yet, Morgan immediately goes on to dispel any misconceptions that intertextuality can be "a value-free, innocent practice" (2). In its essence, it emerges as a hybrid "from the cross-fertilization among several major European intellectual movements during the 1960's and 1970's, including Russian formalism, structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and deconstruction, at the least" (2).

In the introductory chapter to one of the more recent anthologies on intertextuality with a strongly post-structuralist tenor, the editors Judith Still and Michael Worton specify the essence of the theory of intertextuality in its insistence "that a text ... cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (1). They explain this peculiar situation of immanent textual interdependence with two main reasons. Firstly, it is a fact that before producing a text, the creator of the text(s) is also a reader of other texts and thus "the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations, and influences of every kind" (1). Secondly, a text becomes available through the process of reading, which entails a conscious or subconscious introduction of a network of other texts that are available to the reader. Thus, the authors identify two main "axes of intertextuality": the axis of "texts entering via authors (who are first, readers)" and the axis of "texts entering via readers (co-producers)" (2). In a true post-structuralist mode, the authors argue that ultimately both axes are "emotionally and politically charged" (2), and thus there is an inherent love-hate relationship underlying any transfer of texts. They further point out that intertextual relations are predicated on violence and eroticism (2).[2] Regardless of the framework and terminology adopted, the anthology makes it clear that intertextuality as a phenomenon is inseparable from text production, and by analogy, discourse.

If there is one aspect on which Woody Allen scholars agree, it is that he is a consummate intertextualist. The intertextual dimension in his *oeuvre* is in some respects its defining parameter, a thread which not only gives it organic unity, but also situates it in a definite cultural locus. The volumetrics of this locus is characterized by breadth and depth that are directly proportional to the multitude of axes springing from every single text and all of them taken as a whole, resulting in the establishment of stable intertextual cultural ties.

As my investigation is primarily concerned with broader cultural relations rather than more strictly specialized literary or cinematic relations, and since culture itself as a "collection of signifying practices in a society ... is *radically intertextual*" (Morgan 8; emphasis in the original), I will present below a series of theoretical assumptions on intertextuality on which I base my subsequent discussion. Different authors with various theoretical bents imbue it with different meanings and emphasize different components. Despite the multitude of individual frameworks and hence the diversity of theoretical approaches, there are two points that I would like to consider as invariant. Firstly, "intertextuality" has been a property of the text long before it became a fashionable topic of theory. Secondly, it is unlikely that any one scholar would be able to develop and present a theory of intertextuality that is exhaustive, comprehensive, and immune to criticism when it is applied to concrete texts. That is why I find it more productive and useful to work within a network of intertextual theories that can be integrated and will allow for a synthetic organicity that Zholkovsky calls for. On the basis of this premise, I proceed with my pluralistic understanding of intertextuality.

My point of departure is Gérard Genette's detailed taxonomic classification of intertextual relations developed in his 1982 *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*.[3] In my opinion, Genette's meticulous theory, while far from perfect, can appropriately be applied to Allen's works, not only because the French scholar himself finds in Allen a worthy object of investigation and devotes a section to *Play It Again, Sam* (1982, 175-77/1997, 156-58),[4] but also because his taxonomy provides adequate theoretical tools to describe Allen's multilevel invocations of Russian writers, directors, composers, and thinkers.

In fact, Genette's long monograph begins with the specification that the subject of poetics is *transtextualité*, "[la] transcendance textuelle du text" (7),[5] which for him at the time of writing, 13 October 1981, can be found in five distinct varieties. Within Genette's paradigm, then, *intertextualité* is but one restricted category which is defined "par une relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes, c'est-à-dire ... par la présence effective d'un texte dans un autre" (8).[6] In his understanding of the term, there are three basic manifestations of *intertextualité*: *citation* (quoting) as the most explicit and literal form, *plagiat* (plagiarism) which is less explicit since it is undeclared, but it still amounts to literal borrowing, and *allusion* as the least literal form which necessarily engages the reader in a process of inferencing regarding the relationship between the two texts. A brief look into Allen's early *oeuvre* will show that these categories are prominent in the construction of his complex, polyphonic artistic universe.

The second variety of transtextuality in Genette's system refers to the set of relations between the text proper and its *paratexte*: titles, prefaces, notes, epigraphs, illustrations, and other orthographic, generic, etc. markers (9-10/3-4). Paratextuality can be significant in determining how two or more texts are inter-related, as Genette demonstrates with his example of Homer's *Odyssey* and Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the case of Woody Allen, the paratext of his humorous essay "Notes from the Overfed," for instance, provides some cross-cultural references, since the parenthetical subtitle informs us that it was produced by the author "after reading Dostoevski and the new *Weight Watchers* magazine on the same plane trip."

The third variety of transtextual transcendence Genette calls *métatextualité*, often labelled as "commentary" (19/4). This type of relation "unit un texte à autre texte dont il parle, sans nécessairement le citer (le convoquer), voire, à la limite, sans le nommer.... C'est, par excellence, la relation *critique*" (10; emphasis in the original).[7] Genette does not elaborate on the essence of this category and limits himself to conceding that the definitive study on metatextuality is yet to come.

Here again, Genette adopts a rather narrow definition of the term. Yet, based on his logic in presenting the different categories of transtextual relation, I would modify slightly his definition. For Genette, the concept of intertext implies a purely literary relationship between two texts. Metatext, on the other hand, seems to refer to a more global concept with consequences both to previously existing texts and such elements of reality, either material or artistic, which can be defined as archetypal. In this sense, intertextuality is a closed, private, dialogue in which the elements are taken from an earlier textual source usually establishing the superiority of the second text over the first. In the case of metatextuality, however, a relationship of a more archetypal nature is established. The recurrent element is taken with its positive value. Metatextuality, therefore, becomes an open, public, dialogue since the element has more generic implications.

If we adopt this looser interpretation to my analysis, we can then trace some metatextual links between Allen and other artists from different cultures. The more archetypal nature of the metatext in turn evokes the need for a thematic approach which establishes both a greater universality of significance and an inherent kinship between textual and thematic approaches. Thus, for instance, this revised understanding of metatextuality allows us to relate the theme of the three sisters not only to Chekhov's writings, but also to Allen's films (*Interiors*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*), Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the fairy tales, etc. In that sense a metatextual relationship is less direct that an intertextual one. An appropriate example is Allen's *Interiors*. Under no circumstances can it be considered a direct screen version of Chekhov's works. Yet, it is possible to treat *Interiors* as a metatextual paraphrase of selected Chekhovian motifs and situations.

The fourth variety of transtextuality, which comprises the body of Genette's work, is termed by the author *hypertextualité*. The definition of the essence of hypertextuality, however, unfortunately remains ambiguous and unclear: this is "toute relation unissant un texte B (...*hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (...*hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire" (11-12).[8] Genette's example to illustrate the subtle distinctions between *hyper* and *meta* consists of the triad *Aeneid—Odyssey—Ulysses* (12-13/5-7). According to the author, both the *Aeneid* and *Ulysses* can be treated as two different hypertexts of the same hypotext, the *Odyssey*. Thus, for Genette, "l'hypertexte est plus couramment que le métatexte considéré comme une oeuvre 'proprement littéraire'" (12),[9] though this may not always be the case.

Even if Genette is not particularly clear in his distinction — hence Morgan's critique of this point (31) — it is nevertheless there. The notion of hypertext is useful to discuss Allen's "paraphrases" of Russian novels (e.g., *Love and Death*), while metatext is the more accurate term in cases such as *Crimes and Misdemeanors* where there is no literal borrowing, but rather, an indirect commentary and debate. On the other hand, a film such as *Husbands and Wives* can be analyzed successfully by adopting Genette's very narrow conceptualization of intertext. That film abounds in references to Russian authors and their works which, on a superficial level, can be viewed as yet another instance of Allen's known penchant for cultural dialogism on the level of quotation. However, a closer look shows that the Russian authors mentioned are instrumental to the creation of a frenetic, quasi-Dostoevskian atmosphere within the cool New York intellectual milieu. When this level is reached, the intertext has been truly transformed into dialogue.

Genette's fifth variety of transtextual relations consists of the rather abstract *architextualité*, which in essence is identified by the author as "l'objet de la poétique" (7).[10] In other words, the focus of literary study is not the single text, but rather the invariant: "c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des catégories générales, ou transcendantes — types de discours, modes d'énonciation, genres littéraires, etc. — dont relève chaque texte singulier" (7)[11] Although according to Genette's definition, architextuality is less related to intertextuality proper, it is a useful label that can be adopted to account for the type of appropriation Allen effects with regards to Russian literature. This is particularly relevant in the discussion of the Chekhovian quality of *Interiors, September,* or Allen's play "Central Park West." There, in addition to some common thematic threads, Allen also employs formal structuring elements from the Russian author. Strikingly enough, the latter are taken predominantly from his short stories rather than his plays.

In her survey, Morgan is reluctant to accept Genette's fragmentation and hair-splitting distinctions. She is right in her claim that most texts engage in a complex series of transtextual relations that can hardly be classified as neatly as Genette would like to:

> Take, for example, the literary parody — say, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* in relation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* — in which text B quotes text A (intertextuality), criticizes text A's theses (metatextuality), and borrows text A's genetic structure (hypertextuality). Can our interpretation of an intertextual allusion be separated from our understanding of the shared model for tragedy, or from the modern play's critique of the Renaissance play? (31)

My brief examples above demonstrate that the situation, insofar as Allen's approach to cross-cultural dialogue is concerned, is equally complex. Thus, it is unlikely that his literary and cinematic works would present ideal illustrations of Genette's elaborate taxonomy. However, I believe that exactly because it is so detailed, Genette's classification and property allocation can be useful in the analysis.

I adopt Genette's system with the following modifications: 1) I will conform with the more widely accepted term "intertextuality" and will employ it in place of his *transtextualité*; 2) for his narrow understanding of *intertextualité*, I will use the terms "direct quotation"/"citation" and "allusion";[12] 3) I will use the term "metatextuality" in a broader sense, not merely for relations between a text and its critical/theoretical exegesis, as Genette seems to employ it (10/4); 4) I will use some of his subcategories included under the heading of *hypertextualité*, such as parody, pastiche, transposition, as forms of intertextual relations, which, however, will include not only the formal component that Genette considers primary, but also considerations related to content and ideology; 5) in an attempt at syncretism and inclusion, I will adapt Genette's taxonomy by adding to it components from other theories, even if they come from significantly divergent trends in literary studies.

That is why my discussion is further supplemented by some views of intertextuality proposed by Michael Riffaterre in a number of publications devoted to the topic (e.g., *La production du texte / Fictional Truth*, "Interpretation and Undecidability," "Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive"). Unlike Genette, who is interested in taxonomies, Riffaterre has a different aim: to explicate how intertextuality arises and functions within a specific cultural context. In other words, Riffaterre focuses on the perceptions and operations of the receiver of the text, the addressee in Jakobsonian terms. As he points out in "Compulsory Reader Response": "An intertext is one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance (as opposed to the discrete meanings of its successive words, phrases, and sentences)" (56). This kind of orientation is particularly relevant in the case of Russian intertextuality in Allen's works. Because of the frequently deeper levels of intertextual relations in the director's films that go beyond simple name-dropping that is usually easily identified by the film critics, the cultural awareness and the intertextual culture of the addressee are significant factors to be accounted for.

The broader implications of intertextuality in Allen, then, require a broader perspective that goes beyond "l'hypertextualité par son versant le plus ensoleillé" (1982, 16),[13] to use Genette's evocative figure of speech. A useful framework for the inquiry into the deep intertextual structure specifically of Allen's films is presented in the numerous works of Mikhail Bakhtin (see e.g., 1929, 1968/1965, 1981/1963, 1984/1975). Although Bakhtin, too, deals with written texts, in his theoretical postulates he transgresses the generic constraints of the novel and posits discourse as his main concern. Bakhtin's extensive focus on polyphony and heteroglossia lead to the superimposition of an ideological level onto the formal one and the ideologization of narrative space.

The inclusion of Bakhtin and his stress on the relevance of discourse in its never-ending flow and interaction, links the structuralist and the post-structuralist approaches to intertextuality. Thus, both John Frow and Ross Chambers take Bakhtin as a point of departure in their respective socio-culturological discussions of the notion of intertextuality as a mediated relation between the literary text and the social discourses it employs. As Frow clearly states:

> Texts are made out of cultural and ideological norms; out of the conventions of the genre; out of styles and idioms embedded in the language; out of connotations and collocative sets; out of clichés, formulae, or proverbs; and out of other texts. (45)

Chambers further points out that intertextuality presupposes a text's definition in a double negative fashion: first, against an earlier text "as that which it is not" and second, against its own discourse, "with which it should not be identified" (143). In that sense, intertextuality "functions within the literary system as an oppositional gesture toward (socially) canonized texts of the 'tradition'" and, moreover, requires a readership that will recognize in this gesture "an appeal for acceptance of its own (socially and literarily) oppositional gesture" (145). I propose to extend these postulates beyond the literary system and explore the mechanisms by means of which they function across media, specifically in the relationship of film and literature.

III. The Pervasiveness of Theme

The ideological dimension, insofar as the Russian classical writers are concerned, gains prominence in the course of Allen's artistic works. Thus, while in his earlier films and short stories, the intertextual overtones remain primarily, though not entirely, on the surface, and can be analyzed as elements of Allen's comic technique, the later works require a subtler inquiry into thematics rather than stylistics. A good example to illustrate this point is Allen's appropriation of Dostoevsky. As already mentioned above, in the early "Notes from the Overfed," the primary target of parody is the Russian writer's style, signalled as early as the first sentence: "I am fat" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 223). In *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, on the other hand, the surface structure is Allenesque, not Dostoevskian. Thematically, however, Allen engages in a complex ideological dialogue with Dostoevsky with intertextual echoes spanning at least three of the writer's novels: *The Idiot, Crime and Punishment,* and *The Brothers Karamazov.*

The discussion of intertextuality in Allen must then be accompanied by a discussion of recurrent themes in his *oeuvre*. My thematic approach to Allen is based on two recent anthologies devoted to thematic criticism, *The Return of Thematic Criticism* (1993) and *Thematics Reconsidered* (1995). In spite of René Wellek and Austin Warren's condemnation of thematics being "the least literary of histories" (Wellek and Warren 250), over the last decade thematic criticism has undergone gradual revival and resurgence in new contexts. For many literary theorists, one of the factors for such a revitalization is grounded in the fact that contemporary critical thought such as poststructuralism and feminism are inevitably thematic in scope (Ziolkowski 9; see also Sollors

"Introduction"; "Thematics Today" 13-18). In his introductory chapter to the 1993 anthology, Werner Sollors clearly highlights the paradox that while thematic criticism *per se* has been out of favour in North American literary scholarship in the past decade, the new approaches that have been dominating the discipline of literary (and cultural, for that matter) studies *de facto* deal with thematics and work in the context of thematics:

> The critical traditions stemming from Women's Studies, Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, Cultural Studies, Ideological Criticism, and New Historicism also show more than faint traces of (largely undeclared) thematic approaches. Interdisciplinary work that includes literature may, for obvious reasons, be particularly drawn to thematic approaches, as literary texts may be asked questions relating to historical, social, or cultured themes. (xiv)

Thematic criticism is inherently connected to intertextuality: in an age where a text is constructed above all by "acts of re-vision, rereading, re-textualizing, and reappropriation" (Ziolkowski 9), thematology — just like intertextuality — becomes of primary importance.[14] Essentially, the thematic layer always looms large in any cultural approach. As Theodor Ziolkowski succinctly puts it, "the thematic parallel is an invitation to critical interpretation and commentary on the past as well as the present" (8). Menachem Brinker in "Theme and Interpretation" also stresses the unifying power of theme across texts (21-22). In fact, the author claims, "our quest for the theme or themes *of* a story is always a quest for something that is not unique to this specific work" (21) and hence the theme becomes "an interesting meeting point of texts, which proves useful in creating the context in which to interpret a work (at least partially)" (23).

Ziolkowski also draws attention to the relevance of thematics where contemporary culture is concerned. It provides an algorithm for tracing the actual process of the canonization of popular culture and the acquisition of a particular work of the status of a "classic." That this aspect is especially prominent in Woody Allen's cultural practice is supported by the fact that the author himself uses him as an example to illustrate his point:

> In a certain sense, the scholars and critics were forced to the historical and systemic study of literary themes in order to come to grips with their own contemporary culture. And, up to a point, the same applies to recent American popular culture. Every moviegoer, for instance, who appreciates the quotations of *Casablanca* or Bergmann's [sic!] scenarios in the films of Woodie [sic!] Allen ... is practicing thematic criticism.... Indeed, for a postmodern society that lives its life so largely in quotation marks, thematics appears to offer the most appropriate mode of criticism. (8)[15]

Thematic analysis is related to ideology in that "the act of thematic comparison encourages, indeed requires evaluation and judgment; it forces us to ask not only how, but also why and to what effect the theme has been adapted" (Ziolkowski 11). Clearly, at the present stage of research in the humanities in general, the narrowly formalistic understanding of intrinsic "literariness" has been defeated in favour of a more comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the text in which politics have begun to matter again.[16] Moreover, as Sollors points out, "The central question of thematics at this stage may be not, what is a theme? but, how do we find it in a text?" (*Thematics Reconsidered* 17).[17]

My use of thematics in this work is predicated on this premise. In other words, I intend to use the terms "theme" and "motif" within the traditionally accepted definitions for the two. "Theme" will be used to designate a bigger unit while "motif" will be used for a more specific unit with a narrower connotational value. Theodor Wolpers's classification of literary motifs into primary (universal) motifs and secondary (culture-specific) motifs offers some useful distinctions that are relevant with respect to Allen's thematic transpositions. Wolpers defines "primary motifs" as "anthropological constants" (40) which "must be anchored in a concrete historical and individual context in order to achieve full effectiveness" (41). They consist of universal human properties (e.g., remorse, self-knowledge, existential angst) and actions (e.g., journeys, family feuds, generation conflicts) that despite historical variation are essentially constant. That is why "the genuine creation of new primary motifs is very rare" (Wolpers 41).

"Secondary motifs," on the other hand, are more history and culture-dependent, and therefore require a higher degree of historical awareness on the part of the receiver — reader, spectator, audience. In this sense, their identification is less obvious or easily available. The interpretative process becomes even more subtle when an intertextual framework is introduced and the secondary motif is to be traced across texts. Finally, in my case, an additional complexity emerges from the fact that I am dealing at the same time with two different historical periods and two different cultural circumstances. In fact, if Wolpers's taxonomy is followed *stricto sensu*,[18] it would exclude the treatment of these motifs under a common denominator, exactly because of the different historical and cultural situations. It is more interesting, however, to approach the issue from an integrationist point of view and focus on the poetical means and devices that Allen uses to evoke the ideological space of his Russian literary antecedents in his works. In fact, Wolpers himself acknowledges the existence of a strong trend of thematic pastiche as a major creative strategy in the twentieth century:

> Since the end of the nineteenth century, it has become possible and even fashionable to take up the motifs from myths and fairy tales of other, in some cases, exotic cultures, and to join these motifs together in a synthesis or montage. This technique has given rise to a kind of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, which differs from the previous linear progression of the tradition. Furthermore, this technique has the potential for becoming a syncretism of motifs and subjects, a syncretism which is more varied than the traditional parallelism between high and

> popular culture. Moreover, since primeval, classical, biblical and exotic traditions — and those of the more recent epochs of literature — are all continually available, the selection of aesthetic material has grown increasingly arbitrary. (43)[19]

We can further expand the validity of Wolpers's statement by connecting it to Brinker's generalized approach to the theme not only as the "semantic point of contact between the individual text and other texts" but also as

> a meeting place of texts of various kinds: artistic and nonartistic, fictional and nonfictional, and quite often, narrational and nonnarrational. "Themes" are loci where artistic literary texts encounter ... texts of philosophy or the social and human sciences, texts of religion and social ideologies, journalistic texts ... and personal texts such as diaries and letters.... [Moreover,] themes are not limited to linguistic texts.... We connect aspects of the poetic world with what is signified by other texts or nonlinguistic (mental or pictorial) representations.
>
> (26)

In his discussion, Brinker points out that in a fictional context, that is, in the artistic domain, we are not expected to give the particular work a "full-fledged referential reading" even if "themes are usually formulated in referential terms and do indeed suggest models for relations in the real world" (28) since ultimately, the "theme's recognition is the recognition of a *virtual reference*" (29; emphasis in the original).

I want to take up this duality of referential and symbolic reading of the texts and modify it in order to serve the needs of my thematic analysis. I would like to suggest that one way to evoke some of the intertextual echoes of Russian literature in Woody Allen becomes possible and plausible if we assume these two levels of interdependence. In other words, if we remain on a more abstract, symbolic level of thematic analysis, Allen's films can be described as being "about" relationships, love, adultery, guilt, death, etc.: that is, universal human concerns (Wolpers's "primary motifs"). This premise, however, does not illuminate very much the intertextual dimension. We can, after all, claim that these are universal human issues. If we undertake what I conditionally call a "referential analysis" of the themes in their specific connection to the Russian texts, a cross-cultural textual connection beyond the level of parody can be established. The use of the term "referential" here is more metaphorical than literal. The field of reference is not a direct relation to extratextual Russian reality (which also is evoked, for instance, in *Sleeper* with the photograph of Stalin), but rather an awareness of the Russian cultural texts. In other words, the spectators who are familiar with these texts will derive a higher degree of understanding as to how a particular "universal" theme is treated in Allen's films through the prism of Russian culture; for them, the whole multitude of meanings of the Russian texts will be additionally actualized, in harmony or juxtaposition, against the film's overall treatment of these themes.

To sum up, for my discussion of the Russian cultural presence in Woody Allen's *oeuvre*, I adopt an eclectic methodological framework in which I integrate intertextuality and thematics as the two basic categories of analysis. Instead of confining myself to a particular theory, I have opted for a more open-ended approach which allows for a comprehensive investigation into the subject. The choice is justified not only on a theretical level, as an example of contemporary interdisciplinarity in action. To a large degree, it is prompted by Allen's particular brand of *auteurism* which requires a more sophisticated arsenal of tools for grasping the various mechanisms through which he appropriates and reinterprets the word of the Other.[20]

NOTES

[1] Zholkovsky's book *Babel / Бабель* is co-authored with Michael Yampolsky.

[2] It should be mentioned that in the context of the anthology, Still and Worton use the notion of "text" in its narrower sense as "a piece of writing" (33 n2). However, in the same footnote they acknowledge the validity of their claims in regards to the broader use of the term as "anything perceived as a signifying system," in which case, if we adopt the terminology from Jakobson's model of communication, the reader is to be understood in terms of the "receiver" to whom the "message" is addressed while the writer is identified as the "sender" of the same "message." This broadening of the term introduced by Still and Worton is useful for the purposes of my investigation which is not only intertextual, but also cross-media.

[3] The omission of the early theorists such as Kristeva and Barthes is prompted by the need for a more pragmatically-oriented methodology in the present work. While both of these French intellectuals present elaborate gems of rhetoric that truly educe *le plaisir du texte* in a way that sustains Bloom's understanding that the literary and critical text should be placed along a continuum, not on two separate axes, the validity of their theories becomes more problematic when an attempt is made to apply them over a vast amount of arbitrary texts. Since my objective is not to critique these theories, but merely to use them, I will choose those that best serve my purposes.

[4] Double page number references identify the respective passages of cited material in the original text (first reference) and the English translation (second reference), if a published translation exists.

[5] "the textual transcendence of the text" (1).

[6] "as a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say ... as the actual presence of one text within another" (1-2).

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[7] "unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it.... This is the *critical* relationship par excellence" (4).

[8] "any relationship uniting text B (...*hypertext*) to an earlier text A (*hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (5).

[9] "the hypertext is more frequently considered a 'properly literary' work than is the metatext" (5).

[10] "the subject of poetics" (1).

[11] "I mean the entire set of general or transcendent categories — types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres — from which emerges each singular text" (1).

[12] I am not going to discuss the notion of "plagiarism" since it does not occur in the works under consideration.

[13] "the sunnier side of hypertextuality" (1997, 9).

[14] To the opponents of thematic criticism as an approach that tends to substitute the literary domain for other perspectives (historical, sociological, etc.), one can quote Scheglov and Zholkovsky's understanding of thematology at the heyday of structuralism and the infatuation with generative grammars: even though at the time they conceive of "theme" in the context of generative linguistics as a relational category, that is, as a formula in a metalanguage which has certain correspondences with the work, that "does not mean to suggest that the reader be satisfied with reading this formula instead of the tragedy itself" ("On the Concepts of Theme and Poetic World" 143).

[15] In passing, it is worth making the observation that Allen's films appear to be used readily as examples by theorists who are generally dealing with "literary studies." Curiously, while Genette, towards the end of *Palimpsestes*, dismisses the possibility of *hypertextualité* to all arts (436/384) and briefly proposes a parallel taxonomy only for painting and music, he, nevertheless, invokes Allen in earlier section of the monograph (175-77/156-58). He uses his *Play It Again, Sam* as an example of a "cinematic equivalent" of the "antinovel." In the same

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way, Ziolkowski exemplifies "the historical and systematic example of *literary* themes" (8, emphasis added) by a reference to the films of Woody Allen (and Clint Eastwood). Clearly, then, intertextuality and thematics are theoretical strategies not only of literature but of cultural studies, in general.

[16] For a concise survey of the attacks against thematic criticism and, conversely, the proponents of thematic criticism over the years, see Sollors's article "Thematics Today" (*Thematics Reconsidered*, esp. 13-18).

[17] Some of the answers to these questions can be found in the recent collection *The Return of Thematic Criticism*. For example, the articles by Bremond, Brinker, Pavel provide different insights to what Sollors calls "the process of 'theming'" (*Thematics Reconsidered* 18). Bremond's article is particularly useful in that it stresses the intertextual connection that is inherently contained in thematic criticism. For him, the process of thematization involves three stages defined by different attitudes toward the text: "perception," i.e., the realization that a particular themes recurs in different texts, culturally and historically; "position," i.e., comparison and juxtaposition of the particular manifestations of the theme in the respective texts; and "conceptualization," i.e., the generalized conception of a transcendental essence of the theme (51).

[18] While Wolpers's goal is to present a detailed taxonomic classification of literary motifs, he himself is aware that no taxonomy can be absolute: "In this context we have to remember that the dividing line between primary and secondary motifs is often blurred" (42). He then suggests the existence of a third, intermediary category which consists of three subcategories: "a) mythical, historical, and literary themes (such as Prometheus, Ulysses, Julius Caesar, Antigone, King Arthur, Don Quixote, Faustus, Hamlet, Lear, Robinson Crusoe, Don Juan [also known as "migrant characters"], b) the Bible [and other "fundamental texts"], and c) numerous elements of the folk tradition (legends, fairy tales, superstitions, simplified accounts of historical figures and events). All three categories involve phenomena linked to specific traditions such as classical antiquity or Hebrew culture at the time of Christ. At the same time

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many of these phenomena and traditions have become stock elements of European and American heritage and are thought to have universal validity. Their function in literature, therefore, tends to be that of primary motifs when they are combined — as is often the case in sophisticated works — with elaborate culture-specific (secondary) motifs and themes" (42).

[19] I would like to point out that while I agree with the general idea of Wolpers's claim, I find his use of the word "exotic" ambiguous and to some extent patronizing. It is not my intention here to engage in a political debate with the author. In so far as my own thematic analysis is concerned, however, I would like to stress that I *do not* consider Allen's dialogue with the Russian culture to be "exotic," even if we do take into account the fact that he was exposed to it fairly late in his formative years.

[20] In this context, I use "Other" in the Bakhtinian sense, i.e., the discourse(s)/text(s) produced by other creative personalities with whom Allen engages in a cultural dialogue.

CHAPTER IV
Constructing Allen's Russia

"I don't think I could live beyond a 30-minute radius of the Russian Tea Room."
(Woody Allen, *Gentleman's Quarterly* Feb 1986: 172)

Mel Gussow: What kind of woman *don't* you find sexy?
Woody Allen: Martha Raye. She's not my idea of someone enormously sexy. And Nina Khrushchev.
(*New York Times* 6 Aug 1972; qtd. in Spignesi 99)

"Like everybody else, I would have liked to have written the Russian novels."
(Woody Allen, qtd. by Lax 1991, 227)

In his biography of Woody Allen, Eric Lax devotes some attention to all things Russian as they pertain to the American film-maker. He begins the book with a prologue recounting Allen's and Farrow's and their children's "aborted visit to Leningrad" in the late 1980s and Allen's simultaneous writing of the script for *Crimes and Misdemeanors*:

> But once in Russia, anticipation quickly gave way to disappointment and disappointment rapidly turned into desire for flight. Although Woody found Leningrad as beautiful a city as any in the world, he liked nothing about the Hotel Pribaltiskaya: the accommodations; the service; the standing on line to get a cafeteria-style breakfast; even the lobby, which reminded him of an old, cavernous airport. The confines of the hotel aside, there was the confining nature of Soviet society to overcome.... Twenty-three hours after entering the Soviet Union, they [Allen and his family] were on their way out.
>
> (*Woody Allen* 4, 5)

In a way, Allen's anticlimactic desertion of Russia after having arrived with the highest expectations can be seen symbolically as an accurate metaphor that illustrates Allen's ambivalent attitude towards the culture of Russia.

As an American *artiste* who subtly appropriates Western European culture and domesticates it in his own Manhattan chronotope, Allen views "Russia" as a symbolic, if not geographical, space that has become a constant parameter in his creative activity. In this section, I trace the less visible, peripheral Russian elements that can be identified in his artistic works, even though, as the epigraphs suggest, for Allen, the Russian semiosphere is quite pervasive on all levels, including gastronomic, sexual, and intellectual. Lax also confirms this hypothesis unambiguously:

> ...his European and Russian lineage is an integral part of Woody Allen's psyche and creativity.... The quest for a philospohical model to explain a metaphysical order, the search for a proof of God, and the problems inherent in the existential dilemma of man not only are a part of Woody's heritage but are also his daily preoccupation.
>
> So although Kant may be a little sober and uncharismatic for his intellectual taste, the zeitgeist of Königsberg [now Kaliningrad] is reflected in the more romantic minds he likes: Fyodor Dostoevski, with his Russian sense of guilt and quest for absolutes; Albert Camus, who felt that human life was absurd but also felt that one should work to make it better; Søren Kierkegaard, who based his system on faith, knowledge, thought, and reality; and Nikolai Berdyaev, the Russian Christian existentialist. (*Woody Allen* 151)

Among Allen's favourite playwrights there is also a distinct Russian presence: "the dramatic ones: Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood" (*Woody Allen* 88). John Baxter's approach to Allen in his "unauthorized" biography is generally unsympathetic and somewhat malicious; yet, he also provides similar evidence insofar as Allen's intellectual interests are concerned. Describing the encounter between Allen and thirteen year-old Nancy Jo Sales, an Allen fan with whom he maintained an epistolary relationship for a while, Baxter claims that Allen tried to intimidate her by facetiously suggesting that she read "Jelly Roll Morton and Zelda Fitzgerald and maybe Babe Ruth and Chekhov and Sophocles and Charlotte Rampling and Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy and Kafka and Proust and Yeats" (224).[1] Regardless of Allen's intentions, the above quotation is a symptom of how central the Russian cultural representatives are within Allen's artistic universe: to a point that they become an easy target for carnivalization. In the subsequent chapters, I pay particular attention to Allen's indebtedness to Gogol, Tolstoy, Chekov, and Dostoevsky.

Since there is some kind of "Russian presence" in the majority of Allen's prose and films, it is productive to analyze it from a chronologico-thematic perspective. Moreover, there is a definite correlation between the period when Allen's respective films were made, their technical organicity, and the degree of complexity of their problematics. And while with every subsequent Allen movie there is a pattern of evolution in both form and content , his cinematic *oeuvre* conditionally may be separated into two parts. The first part comprises the early comedies from *What's New, Pussycat?* (1965) to *Love and Death* (1975).[2] Chronologically, this period coincides with Allen's prolific contribution of essays for a number of literary (e.g., *The New Yorker*) and entertainment (e.g., *Playboy*) magazines. That is why my discussion also takes into account the intertextual echoes of Russian literature in Allen's prose. The second part of Allen's creative activity, unlike the first one, is an open-ended formation in the sense that it encompasses his works from *Annie Hall* (1977) to his latest *Celebrity* (1998) and will most probably have to be readjusted as Allen continues indefatigably to turn out his one movie per year.

The classification is useful for the thematic investigation of Allen's Russian influences, as well. The films and essays which fall in the first period of Allen's works not only present a more farcical treatment of the creator's concerns, but also exhibit a more superficial appropriation of motifs and poetic devices that can be traced to the Russian literary and cultural tradition. In other words, following Genette's terminology, Russian intertextuality in Allen's early works relates more directly to the domain of *récit* rather than *histoire*. In that sense, in his essays and early films Allen employs a variety of verbal and visual direct quotations, allusions, and parodic techniques in order to integrate a distinctly Russian dimension in his culturally polyphonic fictional world. In the later works, he adopts a more subtle strategy of interweaving common thematic units in his distinctly American matrices.

Any cross-cultural approach to Allen's *oeuvre* invites at least the mentioning, if not a full-fledged discussion, of his obsessive penchant for name-dropping. In the context of an intertextual-thematic influence study, the use of proper names acquires additional relevance, beyond mere cultural erudition. In fact, when approached from a systematic point of view, Allen's consistent use of recurrent names can be viewed as yet another strategy he employs to construct an organically unified yet multi-voiced artistic universe. While many theoretical works deal with the issue of naming in its relations to questions of verisimilitude and fictionality (e.g., Nicole; Riffaterre 1990, esp. 33-37; in film, see Stam 1985, 136), less attention is paid to the effects of "name-dropping" within a particular artistic text. Peter Nasselroth's article "Naming Names in Telling Tales" deals specifically with this aspect of the aesthetic use of proper names. And while his study is exclusively devoted to literary texts, his postulates and analyses can be transposed equally successfully to the cinematic text.

In principle, Nasselroth identifies three distinct cases of intertextual use of proper names in literary (and cinematic) contexts. The first variety involves the integration of proper names of real historical figures in the particular artistic work (e.g., the presence of real historical figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Prince Bagration alongside the fictional Pierre Bezukhov and Andrey Bolkonsky in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*). These are called "historical real names." The second case illustrates the opposite situation when a famous literary character is intentionally actualized in another work; Nasselroth calls them "fictional real names" because "we know them from literature" (133). Put differently, these are instances of migrant characters transgressing the borders of the works that originally created them. One such instance is Emma Bovary who even makes an appearance in Allen's celebrated short story "The Kugelmass Episode" (*Side Effects*).[3] Nasselroth points out that the transgression of the boundaries of the original text by literary characters exemplifies the fictionalization of the literary names since the characters signified by these names have reached the point of representing types (133). The emancipation of the name (and the character behind it) is even more drastically exemplified in film. An immediate example that comes to mind is the "autonomous" existence of Agent 007, James Bond. In fact, by now his life as a "literary" character created by Ian Fleming's in his Cold War spy novels has been almost entirely obliterated firstly, by his cinematic existence, and secondly, by the real actors with real names who have represented Bond on the screen.

Finally, Nasselroth introduces a third case in which the use of proper names acquires a slightly more complex use; he calls them "real fictional names." This is the situation when an author introduces a character with a fictional name behind which the readers, based on their broader cultural competence can decode the identity of an individual from the extratextual world.[4] Nasselroth compares these names to the formulaic conventions for naming used in the *roman à clef.* His example is Morris Zapp, a character who appears in David Lodge's campus novels and who has been recognized by anyone in the field of literary and cultural studies to stand for the name Stanley Fish (138-40). Knowledge and recognition of this detail, while certainly enhancing *le plaisir du texte,* are not obligatory. Regardless of the readers' belonging or not to the camp of modern academia, Zapp's larger-than-life intellectual manoeuvers over a period of more than two decades eventually gives him "the potential to become ... a 'fictional real name,' a name that enters into our sociolect, our culture, and our encyclopedias" (Nasselroth 140).

While the fictionalization of historical proper names is a fairly straightforward aesthetic practice, the distinction between types two and three is more problematic because the borderline between them is fluid and at times exact classification may become difficult. Essentially, "real fictional names" identify fictional characters that have eventually acquired an autonomous status and thus have the power to reemerge in other texts and signify particular social types. The same definition is applicable to "fictional real names," with the additional characteristic that these characters *a priori* have been inspired by concrete extratextual prototypes.

For Allen, proper names function as the semantic pillars of his cultural games. The names of his characters carry inherent symbolism. Some, like Zelig, have already entered our sociolect, if not — yet — our encyclopedias. Others, such as the ubiquitous Max subtly float from one film to another and evoke only hidden parallels. Yet, while the miraculous reappearance of Tom Baxter from *The Purple Rose of Cairo* as Biff Baxter in *Radio Days* through the mediation of Jeff Daniels is a source of amusement, the casting of Mariel Hemingway as both the idealistic Tracy, whose principle of life some twenty years ago was "to have a little faith in people" (*Manhattan*), and the embittered, right-wing, ultra-Christian moralizing mother who is ready to destroy Allen's title character in *Deconstructing Harry*, can hardly mitigate the harsh overtones of the creator's vision.

Historical real names make up the second onomastic layer in Allen's *oeuvre*. These names are not only markers of different domains of human activity, they are also Allen's direct and indirect addressees against whom he measures his own artistic contributions. In that sense, a distinction should be made between cultural referents, such as Ernst Becker, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, Ingmar Bergman, Gustav Mahler, etc., who exist objectively in and out of Allen's world, and other historical figures who are fictionalized by Allen and parodically "play" as themselves: for instance, Napoleon in *Love and Death*, the presenters Howard Cosell, Roger Grimsby, Don Dunphy in *Bananas*, Marshall McLuhan in *Annie Hall*, the intellectuals Susan Sontag, Irving Howe, Saul Bellow, Bricktop, Bruno Bettleheim, and John Morton Blum in *Zelig*, or the comedians Sandy Baron, Corbett Monica, Jackie Gayle, Morty Gunty, Will Jordan, Howard Storm, Jack Rollins, Milton Berle, Joe Franklin, Howard Cosell in *Broadway Danny Rose.*

Allen likes to mention the names of Russian and Soviet cultural or political figures in his texts. Among the direct and indirect references are Russian writers — Nikolai Gogol,[5] Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Anton Chekhov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Osip Mandelstam; Russian composers — Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Igor Stravinsky, Aram Khachaturian;[6] Russian philosophers such as Nikolai Berdyaev; Russian *cinéastes* — Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Alexander Dovzhenko;[7] the Russian counsellor Rasputin and the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. They are all an important component of the intertextual layer in Allen's works.

Since his early essays in *The New Yorker, The New Republic, Playboy,* etc. Allen likes to play with culture. His prose, published in the three collections *Getting Even* (1971), *Without Feathers* (1975), *Side Effects* (1980), illustrates his development as a comic writer and an erudite. Allen's formal development as a comedian parallels his philosophical maturation. Each collection marks a stage in Allen's evolution and possesses certain cohesion in terms of Allen's use of comedy. First, Allen "gets even" both with cultural authorities and peers; then in a dialogic exchange with Emily Dickinson who says that "hope is the thing with feathers," he proclaims that there is no hope — "the thing with feathers" turns out to be his nephew whom he must take to Zurich for therapy ("Selections from the Allen Notebooks," *The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 9); finally, he delves into issues pertaining to the human predicament, the nature of relativity, moral and ethical considerations, and looks for their "side effects." One major premise, however, remains a constant: namely that comedy through humour and laughter deals with serious philosophical and sociological issues such as the meaning of life, the existence or non-existence of God, the possibility of an afterlife, as well as more mundane topics, such as the search for happiness in the everyday life, the dehumanizing effects of technology, the pomposity of pseudo-intellectuals, the problems in a dysfunctional society. Allen's prose make him one of the most effective chroniclers of the concerns of men and women at the end of the twentieth century.

In carnivalizing high culture through his parodic writing, Allen effectively manages to blend the representatives from different nationalities and traditions into an all-encompassing layer of the manifestations of human creativity, at times represented by fine achievements and at times by pure absurdity, as demonstrated in his short story "Yes, But Can the Steam Engine Do This?" The Russian tradition is always present:

> My eyes became moist as I looked out of the window at the shimmering towers of the city, and I experienced a sense of eternity, marvelling at man's ineradicable place in the universe. Man the inventor! Da Vinci's notebooks loomed before me — brave blueprints for the highest aspirations of the human race. I thought of Aristotle, Dante, Shakespeare. The First Folio. Newton. Handel's *Messiah*. Monet. Impressionism. Edison. Cubism. Stravinsky. $E=mc^2$... (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 177-78)

Incidentally, Stravinsky recurs again and again in Allen's short stories. In "A Giant Step for Mankind" (*Side Effects*), Allen again forcefully clashes the sublime and the mundane by describing a man's face as having "accumulated a repertoire of facial tics and blinks that demand nothing less than a complete musical score by Stravinsky" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 407). In "Nefarious Times We Live In" (*Side Effects*), after a four-week stay at a mental institution the protagonist Willard Pogrebin wakes up with the firm conviction that he "was Igor Stavinsky" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 399). Lee Guthrie, in her controversial biography, quotes Allen's assessment of Mort Sahl's contribution to American humour as Sahl having "changed the face of comedy the way Stravinsky changed music" (22). It is also worth noting that

Allen intended to use Stravinsky's music in *Love and Death*, but was discouraged by Ralph Rosenblum who found Stravinsky's modernist style inaccessible, and instead suggested Prokofiev for the epic quality of his music (Rosenblum and Karen 270). In his semi-memoir *Radio Days*, Allen uses Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Flight of the Bumblebee" in a Harry James arrangement in order to create a subtle juxtaposition of "nineteenth-century European highbrow culture with a twentieth-century American popular culture" (Wernblad 118). For Allen, music is functionalized and content-dependent. It transcends its decorative properties as an extradiegetic framing device and is transformed into a meaning-generating unit of high connotative and intertextual value.

On the level of content, even Allen's most humorous or absurd pieces deal with serious humanist concerns. Russia often becomes a vehicle for the writer's arguments: at times, it is thematized, at times it is used to illustrate. In "A Brief, Yet Helpful Guide to Civil Disobedience" (*Without Feathers*) Allen's seemingly facetious discussion of oppression and how to overcome it touches upon the Russian revolution, which, according to the author, "simmered for years and suddenly errupted when the serfs finally realized that the Czar and the Tsar were the same person" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 70). The absurdity of the argument inevitably evokes parallels with Gogol's punning strategies and his intentional stripping of the phrase of all logical meaning, to leave it an empty shell hanging on an *non sequitur* (see Eikhembaum). In his "Hassidic Tales, with a Guide to Their Interpretation by the Noted Scholar" (*Getting Even*), Allen mocks the notorious Russian anti-Semitism by telling the story of Rabbi Baumel from Vitebsk who embarks on a protest against "the unfair law prohibiting Russian Jews from wearing loafers outside the ghetto" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 210). In "The Gossage-Vardebedian Papers" (*Getting Even*) which deals with an epistolary chess game between the two rivals, the Armenian Vardebedian conveys his scorn for his addressee by comparing the sense of despair that the correspondence awakens in him to that contained in "the letters of German soldiers at Stalingrad" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 220).

The notion of "the Soviet threat" during the period of the Cold War is at least in part the inspiration for Allen's play "Don't Drink the Water." Set in the fictional Iron Curtain country of Vulgaria, the play follows the experiences of a New Jersey caterer, Walter Hollander, wrongfully accused of spying, who takes refuge in the US Embassy. Notably, one of the charities that asks for Sandy Bates's patronage in *Stardust Memories* is the fund "for scientists imprisoned in the Soviet Union." In "My Speech to the Graduates" (*Side Effects*), Allen makes a fleeting reference to the Soviet totalitarian state which would sentence a citizen to thirty years in labour camp if the person is "merely caught whistling" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 366). This observation — as chilling as it is light — finds further manifestations in Allen's mock-newspaper correspondence on the topic of "Fabrizio's: Criticism and Response" (*Side Effects*). The humorist uses the same strategy of bitter satire as in "The Schmeed Memoirs" (*Getting Even*) to try to make sense of evil in the world through humour. The underlying implication is that no serious alternative process of rationalization is capable of providing a satisfactory resolution. At the same time, the author criticizes the smugness and hypocrisy of the observers — the intellectuals who are supposed to be endowed with an acute sense of right and wrong — who fail to stop its proliferation:

> How quickly we forget that during the worst era of the Stalinist purges Fabrizio's not only was open for business but enlarged its back room to seat more customers! No one there said anything about Soviet political repression. In fact, when the Committee to Free Soviet Dissidents petitioned Fabrizio's to leave the gnocchi off the menu until the Russians freed Gregor Tomshinsky, the well-known Trotskyite short-order cook, they refused. Tomshinsky by then had compiled ten thousand pages of recipes, all of which were confiscated by the N.K.V.D..... Where were the so-called intellectuals at Fabrizio's then?

> The coat check-girl, Tina, never made the smallest attempt to raise her voice when coat check-girls all over the Soviet Union were taken from their homes and forced to hang up clothing for Stalinist hoodlums. I might add that when dozens of Soviet physicists were accused of overeating and then jailed, many restaurants closed in protest, but Fabrizio's kept up its usual service and even instituted the policy of giving free after-dinner mints!... The truth is, the intellectuals simply preferred not to see the difference. I dined there once with Professor Gideon Cheops, who was served an entire Russian meal, consisting of borscht, Chicken Kiev, and halvah — upon which he said to me, "Isn't this spaghetti wonderful?" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 444-45)

The Russian-related gastronomic layer, in addition to being generously exploited in *Love and Death* with its indirect sexual connotations, is also found in the short story "The Condemned" (*Side Effects*) where the philosophically-bent Cloquet — like Boris Grushenko — is in his prison cell awaiting execution. When offered a last meal, he weakly responds that all he wants is "some Russian dressing" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 313). In his 1971 PBS special, *The Politics and Humor of Woody Allen*, a sixty-minute commissioned piece that in the end was never aired, Allen incorporates a half-hour fake documentary entitled "The Harvey Wallinger Story" as a satirical piece against Henry Kissinger. In it, the relationship between power and sex is established through a subtle reference — once again — to Russian politics. The underlying motif which unites food and sex is one and the same: treason and betrayal. Allen plays Wallinger, an utterly despicable character whose wife Renata Baldwin (Diane Keaton) divorces him after finding out that he has had sex with a Democrat. The subsequent explanations are as follows:

> Renata: I would not have minded if he had committed adultery with a member of his own party.

> Wallinger: Sex is a capricious thing. Sometimes I feel like making love to a Republican. Generally I like to wait and see what the Russians do first.
>
> (qtd. in Lax, *On Being Funny* 205-06)

Allen actually continues the theme of the social function of intellectuals as leaders against oppression in his early film, *Sleeper*. In it, too, there is a snapshop of Stalin who is described as someone whom the protagonist Miles Monroe (Woody Allen) is not "too crazy about." Allen sees the future as a sterile, autocratic society, which, however, unlike Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, or Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, is run by incompetent bureaucrats "whose success in using their own technology is no greater than Miles's" (Lee 45). In terms of the external characteristics of Allen's futureland, there is an uncanny resemblance with the Los Angeles Allen depicts in *Annie Hall*.[8]

What is striking about *Sleeper*, however, is its kinship on the level of fabula with Mayakovsky's late play *The Bedbug* (*Klop* 1928). In it, Mayakovsky has already abandoned his earlier optimistic belief in technology, the promise of machines, and the eventual victory of communism reflected in his poetry and the early play *Mystery Bouffe* (*Misteriia-buff*, 1918). Like *Sleeper*, *The Bedbug* uses the device of the frozen character who awakens in the future many years later. In Act I, Mayakovsky's protagonist Ivan Prisypkin becomes obsessed with the consumerism connected with the old, bourgeois way of life. He rejects true sentiments in favour of materialist values, changes his name to Pierre Skrypkin, and loses all touch with his human side. During a chaotic fire everyone appears to have been killed. Skrypkin, however, survives frozen in a block of ice. Act II occurs fifty years later when Skrypkin finally awakens in a world of technological marvels. Yet, instead of a paradise on earth promised by the ideologists of communism, the protagonist finds a cold, inhuman, and heartless world. It is a society governed solely by reason and hostile to emotions, passion, or weakness. Gradually, Skrypkin's position in it shifts in value. From a representative of the old, retrograde bourgeois way of life, paradoxically, he becomes the bearer of the human element in a world permeated by machines and logic. When he tries to teach his fellow-citizens to drink, they all fall sick due to alcoholic intolerance; he is equally disastrous in his attempts to make them fall in love. In the end, Skrypkin is put in the zoo as a survivng specimen of the parasitic species *Philistinus vulgaris* whose only companion is another parasite — a bedbug.

Mayakovsky's play ends on an even darker note than Allen's film. At least in the film Miles is able to introduce some change and subvert some of the established doctrines by which the country is governed. Moreover, he is eventually able to awaken a sense of social responsibility in the hedonistic Luna Schlosser (Diane Keaton) who even joins a revolutionary underground movement. In spite of the optimistic happy ending, some more sombre overtones can be detected in the film. Even though in the end the tyrannical Leader — who, incidentally, bears an uncanny resemblance to the media representation of late North Korean communist president Kim Il Sun — is replaced by the revolutionary Erno (John Beck), the final scene is ambivalent in its message: it focusses on Miles and his strong scepticism that science, religion, and politics can successfully solve the problems humanity faces. In a typical Allen fashion, Miles reaffirms the sole two inexorable constants in life: sex and death. Everything else is a mere simulacrum that is bound to change.

Sleeper manifests and subverts numerous features of the science-fiction genre and the traits that define dystopic art. In fact, much of the veiled sombreness in the film arises from the suggestion that soon Erno will become just another version of the ousted former Leader. In his implicit warning that power always carries the danger of fascism, as it is exemplified in the swastika sequence, for instance, Allen's film calls for some indirect parallels with another Russian text — Evgeni Zamyatin's novel *We* (*My*, 1924). In it, the author also warns against the thin line that separates socialism from totalitarianism in a society governed solely by reason and science. Zamyatin's One State is ruled by a Benefactor who controls every aspect of his citizens' existence. Art is produced according to strictly rational mathematical principles: music is generated by special musicometers while poetry must serve purely didactic purposes. In Allen's world, the worst has also happened to art presented as debased, insipid, and devoid of any sense. In *We*, after a careful examination the citizens are allotted pink coupons which allow them to have sex with a partner of their choice provided that it remains a mere function of the organism with no emotional attachments involved. In Allen's Central Parallel of the Americas, the Orgasmatron allows its users to experience sexual pleasure without the messiness involved in dealing with a partner, or the inconvenience of getting undressed. Luna explains the "advantages" of the approach to Miles through the prism of Allen's traditional scepticism about men and women ever being able to understand each other:

> Luna: But, Miles, don't you see, meaningful relationships between men and women don't last. This was proven by science. You see, there's a chemical in our bodies that makes it so that we all get on each other's nerves sooner or later.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

In *We*, D-503 and I-330 — like Miles and Luna — eventually become sexually and emotionally attached and begin to question the monovalent truth offered to them by the state, a fact that leads to their brief membership in an underground movement. In the course of the story, both male protagonists, D-503 and Miles, respectively, are captured and submitted to a surgical procedure on their brain. For a while Miles forgets his mission and becomes a faithful follower of the leader. As parody would have it, however, Luna is able to deprogramme him and win him on the side of the revolutionaries. In Zamyatin's world, such an easy resolution is not conceivable — especially considering the actual political state of affairs in the Soviet Union when the book was written. Once deprived of his imagination D-503 is unredeemable. He watches indifferently as I-330 is publicly executed. Unlike Miles, who remains a sceptic until the end, D-503 proclaims the ultimate victory of reason.

In the early essays and in some films, Allen's Russian references are not necessarily charged with complex implications. Sometimes, they are based on actual events from Allen's life. Thus, for instance, the communists in *Radio Days* are based on real-life neighbours of the Konigsbergs, as this is attested by Spignesi: "The family in the house on the other side were both Russian Jews and Communists. They shocked the neighborhood by flagrantly not observing the Jewish high holy days" (198; see also Lax, *Woody Allen* 32). Often, they just serve to foreground the author's erudition and familiarity with the European tradition. In those cases, the Russian names and titles inscribe themselves within the paradigm of Allen's penchant for name-dropping. Thus, in "A Little Louder, Please" (*Getting Even*), Gogol's *Overcoat* is mentioned in the context of Beckett's *Godot*, Ichabod Crane, Bugs Bunny, Broadway pubs, and a number of pompous, yet fictious titles such as *Sight and Stream* (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 247-53). In "Nefarious Times We Live In," after electroshock therapy the confined Pogrebin performs *The Cherry Orchard* with several chimpanzees "in perfect English" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 398). Later on he is given a ride by two native Californians, "a charismatic young man with a beard like Rasputin's and a charismatic young woman with a beard like Svengali's" (398). Although "A Guide to the Lesser Ballets" is directly modelled on S.J. Perelman's parodic extravaganzas, in subject matter it is once again close to the Russian subtext. Naturally, the subject of ballet as an art with a great tradition in Russia provides partial motivation for the Russian onomastic layer. Not only is the ballet "Dmitri" inhabited by the "characters" of Natasha and Leonid but through the puppet Dmitri it additionally evokes the tradition of the puppet theatre as a locus for carnival that greatly influenced Gogol's evolution as a parodist.

In "The Shallowest Man" (*Side Effects*), Mendel woos the hospital nurse by bringing her a biography of Tolstoy ("he heard her mention how much she loved *Anna Karenina*"), Wordsworth's poetry, and caviar (*The Complete

Prose of Woody Allen 423). In one of his stand-up comedy routines, Allen explains that after having taken a course in rapid reading, he "read *War and Peace* in twenty minutes" (qtd. in Guthrie 38). The formula is recycled in his humorous essay "Spring Bulletin" (*Getting Even*), but there Tolstoy's epic is substituted with Dostoevsky's equally challenging *The Brothers Karamazov*. In *Manhattan*, Mary Wilkes's professional ambition is to edit a collection of Tolstoy's letters, a project she never seems to be able to accomplish. It would be wrong to consider the mentioning of Tolstoy in the film only as gratuitous name-dropping. The Russian writer's presence is justified on the level of thematics, as well. After all, Isaac's quest in *Manhattan* is to find the meaning of life. Without coming to an existential breakthrough, at the end of the film Isaac (Woody Allen) comes to the same conclusion as *Anna Karenina*'s Levin: the meaning of life is in life itself. For the director of *Manhattan* art plays an invaluable role to valorize life. Later, however, in *Hannah and Her Sisters* the family comes to the foreground. In addition to the prominent Tolstoyan presence in that film that is linked to the dominant theme of family, Allen makes another playful Russian reference that is connected to the sisters' occupation. In fact, only Hannah is already a recognized actress whose latest success is playing Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Holly, however, is still aspiring towards the profession and throughout the film is shown at various auditions. In an effort to vent her frustration from her inability to conquer the theatre, she and April (Carrie Fisher) decide to open a catering company, which for a while is quite prosperous. Naturally, the Allenesque touch is easy to spot: the operation is humorously named The Stanislawski Catering Company.

Clearly, then, Allen is able to functionalize his admiration for what Slavic scholarship refers to as the "Russian giants" by working their thematic diversity and philosophical quests into his own films. At the same time, this is not some kind of blind following or imitation. In a number of instances, the Russian "loose, baggy monsters" — to use Henry James's famous definition of Tolstoy's novels — become the target of light-hearted laughter. The story "By Destiny Denied" (*Side Effects*), in addition to depicting a character by the hybrid name of Blanche Mandelstam, is an apt parody of the detailed writers' diaries and annotations of potential stories and plotlines which have become a bulky section in Russian scholarship in their own right. The early "Notes from the Overfed" (*Getting Even*) is a more sophisticated artistic invention that arises during Allen's simultaneous reading of "Dostoevski and the new *Weight Watchers* magazine on the same plane trip" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 223) which, according to Yacowar, is built on the premise of "bathetic collisions between discordant contexts" (*Loser Takes All* 85). The essay satirizes not so much the concerns of Dostoevsky's anonymous Underground man as it does contemporary American society for its superficial values and lack of deeper perspective. This interpretation is plausible if it is contextualized within Allen's overall artistic production. While "Notes from the Overfed" ultimately remains an exercise in stylistic virtuosity, his highly criticized *Stardust Memories* in many respects can be considered Allen's own enraged discourse from the underground.

In *Manhattan*, once again Allen delicately weaves a Russian thread into the American milieu. The spirit is Chekhovian in that the film "is full of moments that are uproariously funny and others that are sometimes shattering for the degree in which they evoke civilized desolation" (Canby, "Slice of the Big Apple"); the New York setting perfectly portrays an atmosphere of "neurosis, cultural gush and underlying destiny" (Houston, "Cannes '79" 142). Moreover, in it Allen hardly provides any answers, only poses the question of faith in people. The film abounds in insider jokes and humorous demonstrations of Allen's erudition. In a scene where Isaac takes his son (Damion Sheller) for lunch specifically at the Russian Tearoom, both of them are wearing matching T-shirts with the inscription "Divorced fathers and sons," an indirect reference to Turgenev's novel *Ottsy i deti*, usually rendered in English as *Fathers and Sons* (although the literal translation should be *Fathers and Children*).

Turgenev's spirit is in fact more strongly present in Allen's works than it is to be expected just on the basis of direct references. There is a striking similarity between the two artists in terms of ideas, style, and sceptical worldview. Compared to other Russian figures, he is not as visible and certainly his name is less recurrent in Allen's stories or films. To some degree, this can be explained with Turgenev's less "epic" philosophical concerns when compared with Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. This fact is acknowledged by the author himself who remembers that after his publication of *A Sportman's Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*, 1852), he gained some recognition from the influential Belinsky, but the latter never put too much hope in him ("Recollections of Belinsky," vol.14). The reason for this somewhat "discriminatory" attitude towards Turgenev is due to the fact that at a time of considerable social and political upheaval in Russia, his main interest is focussed on the individual. He is concerned with characters, not types, and over the years this critical perception has gained him the reputation of a master of portraiture. A typical evaluation of this trend is synthesized in the words of Maurice Baring:

> Turgenev painted people of the same epoch, the same generation; he dealt with the same material; he dealt with it as an artist and as a poet, as a great artist and poet. But his vision was weak and narrow when compared to that of Tolstoy, and his understanding was cold and shallow when compared to that of Dostoevsky. His characters beside those of Tolstoy seem caricatures and beside those of Dostoevsky they are conventional.
>
> (63; also qtd. in Knowles 129)

Using his favourite gastronomic metaphors, Allen actually provides his own reinterpretation of this view in *Husbands and Wives*, in the scene where Gabe (Woody Allen) gives his student Rain (Juliette Lewis) a "crash course" on the Russian realists:

> Gabe: Tolstoy is a full meal. Turgenev, I would say, is a fabulous dessert — that's how I would characterize him.
> Rain: And Dostoevsky?

> Gabe: Dostoevsky is a full meal with a vitamin pill and extra wheat germ.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

Curiously, in his early interviews, Allen uses very similar imagery to define his own contribution against the achievements of directors such as Resnais, Antonioni, Bergman, Fellini, Buñuel. In a 1978 interview with Benayoun, he describes his films as funny but lacking substance: "They are curtain raisers, entertainments and desserts" (157). And in the famous Kakutani interview he sums up his achievements as being "the bed of lettuce the hamburger must rest on" (222).

There is no contention that Turgenev's breadth is more limited than that of his contemporaries Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. Moreover, although he does polemicize with them on a variety of ideas, as an artist he does not take the idea as his starting point. As Knowles points out, "He finds a suitable character first, and then filters the ideas through that creation" (131). In terms of his views about the possibility of human aspirations, Turgenev manifests a pessimistic disposition due to a worldview conditioned by his belief "that love is transitory and inseparable from death, that it is an illness, a poison, or a madness, leading to uncontrollable and irrational behavior on the part of those who experience it" (Knowles 131). In general, he is "an apostle of moderation" (Lowe 1) who is much less political than other representatives of his surrounding environment.[9]

In the Kakutani interview Allen admits to a similar more existential orientation in his artistic efforts:

> What sort of things recur? For me, certainly the seductiveness of fantasy and the cruelty of reality. As a creative person, I've never been interested in politics or any of the solvable things. What interested me were always the unsolvable problems: the finiteness of life, and the

> sense of meaninglessness and despair, and the inability to communicate. The difficulty of falling in love and maintaining it. (221)

In his works, Turgenev depicts relationships between representatives of the gentry; Allen's social focus is equally restricted to a very narrow slice of American society comprised of upper middle-class Manhattanites who are both economically and intellectually superior. In an objective evaluation of *Annie Hall*, his most successful film to date, Allen acknowledges the limited nature of his artistic vision:

> It massages the prejudices of the middle class.... It's nothing to be ashamed of but nothing special. It's still in the area of romantic comedy and "relationships," which I mean pejoratively; not relationships like *Anna Karenina* or *The Black and the Red*. (qtd. in Lax, *Woody Allen* 275)

In terms of style, Turgenev's lyricism and elegance emerge in Allen's small, chamber films, such as *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*, which in terms of setting and the pervasiveness of non-diegetic musical accompaniment is reminiscent of Turgenev's novel *A Home of the Gentry* (*Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, 1859) with its luminous depiction of the natural beauty of the countryside and the sounds of piano and cello that reverberate in the manor. As far as the personal conflicts and the misguided attractions that arise among the characters at the estate go, there are parallels with Turgenev's play "A Month in the Country" ("Mesiats v derevne," 1850).

From the perspective of literary history, one of Turgenev's greatest achievements is perhaps of terminological nature. In his 1850 contribution to the confessional genre, "Diary of a Superfluous Man" ("Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka"), he gives a name to a literary type — the "superfluous man" — who is one of the dominant figures in Russian literature from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (*Evgenii Onegin*) onward. In its essence, the type is a tragic Romantic individual at odds with the mainstream values of society. The clash underlying the superfluous man's tragedy is basically the problem of conformism *versus* non-conformism and the adjacent problematic of belonging. While traditional scholarship considers the "superfluous man" a typically Russian theme, I would suggest that it is possible to approach the Allen persona from the same angle.

This somewhat "unorthodox" universalization of the Russian theme of the superfluous man has already been adopted by Ellen Chances in her 1978 monograph, *Conformity's Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature*. In it, Chances goes beyond the traditionally established characteristics that define the theme and reexamines the concept. Her redefinition involves a greater emphasis on the issue of conformism *versus* non-conformism and, more importantly, a discussion of the "misfit character in a context that extends *beyond the boundaries of Russian literature and beyond the boundaries of literature*" (Chances, 1978 n.p. [iii]; emphasis added). Although Chances's work focusses on Russian texts, she applies the concept to characters from nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature who are not usually regarded in that light, such as Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin (*The Idiot*), or Fyodor Sologub's Peredonov (*Petty Demon* [*Melkii bes*]).

An even more relevant fact is the implicit parallel that Chances establishes between the "psychological traits of American and Russian personalities" where the issue of conformity takes a central place. It is related to a common historical experience that is also highlighted in the introductory section of George Steiner's illuminative comparative monograph *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (30-41). The common denominator that defines the two mentalities is the "strong inferiority complex with respect to the Western European nations" (Chances 1978, 172). Based on this curious overlapping of national psychologies and the belief that the superfluous man should not be viewed as a "monolithic term" (173), Chances ends her study with the suggestion that "it would be rewarding to follow up a study of Russia's superfluous man with a comparative analysis of the conformity patterns as exhibited in the two [Russian and American] literatures" (172-73). This is possible if, following Chances, we expand the semantics of the typically Russian theme of the "superfluous man" by minimizing the ethnic, Russian, characteristics of this human type and foreground, instead, the quintessential feature that defines the type, namely the issue of non-conformity.

In that light, the Allen persona as it gradually emerges from the self-conscious, complex-filled fool from the early days of stand-up comedy to the successful but restless Lee Simon (Kenneth Branagh) who still does not know what he wants out of life in *Celebrity* but refuses simply to settle, seems to be a prime example of an American version of the superfluous man. Thus, within the context of intertextuality and particularly the presence of Russian culture in Allen's artistic world, it is possible to analyze the ideological construction of Allen's persona from a different perspective than the traditionally accepted notion of the *schlemiel*. The relation between conformity and non-conformity is an issue which concerns Allen in many of his films from *Take the Money and Run* (1969) to *Manhattan* (1979), perhaps reaching its most poignant expression in *Zelig*, and later reappearing in *Shadows and Fog*. Moreover, Allen's entire literary and cinematic production can be viewed as one extended study into the psychology of the anti-hero, his inability to act, his pervasive self-doubting, his conscious choice *not* to go with the mainstream: "What interests me is not the hero. It's the coward. It's not the success but the failure. I think that there are so many more of them in life. That's what I try and reflect in my movies" (Allen, qtd. in McCann, *Woody Allen: New Yorker* 79).

Approaching some of Allen's characters through the "superfluous man/woman" paradigm would be productive for the discussion of some of his remarkable female characters, such as the three sisters in *Interiors* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Marion Post (Gena Rowlands) in *Another Woman*, or Alice (Mia Farrow) in the film by the same name. These protagonists have all been conceived to demonstrate a non-conformist streak, a will to search unto themselves, and a strength of character that absolves Allen from the traditional accusation that his women always end up cast in a Pygmalion-Galatea type of relationship. In fact, a close study of "Allen's women" in his films would demonstrate that in the end, they achieve a much higher degree of emancipation and self-fulfillment than his male protagonists.

While Allen's interest in the themes of classical Russian writers is undoubted, it is not so with classical Russian *cinéastes*. Compared to other cinematic traditions, the presence of quotations from Russian/Soviet directors in Allen's films is insignificant. This is not to suggest, however, that he is not familiar with them. Sergei Eisenstein is parodied both in *Bananas* and *Love and Death*. In *Love and Death*, the Eisensteinian layer is already actualized on the level of Prokofiev's musical score, used by the Russian director in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938). In the course of the battle scenes, Allen opts for the use of a montage sequence similar to that in *Strike* (1924), depicting sheep running as a symbolic replacement for the soldiers in which the artist's position on the war is reflected. Later, Allen parodically inverts the scene of the awakening lions from *The Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potemkin*, 1925) and has one of them fall asleep. The textbook scene of the bouncing baby carriage from *Potemkin* is comically replicated in *Bananas* where the entire film presents a satirical and extremely sceptical treatment of revolutionary movements. In his review of *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, Rosenbaum discusses the technical manipulations Allen undertakes in the original Japanese film, which he views as "an anti-Bazinian, Vertovian revolution whereby *découpage* replaces *mise-en-scène* and the director's chair makes way for the editing bench" ("How to Live in Airconditioning" 166). In terms of Allen's overall filmic production, the choice of montage is definitely a deviation to be explained with the nature of the particular project. In general, Allen's preference is for long takes, not fast-paced montagic sequences. Kuleshov is also acknowledged as an authority by Allen. Sabourand finds traces of the Kuleshov influence in *Alice* where the image of the child in the documentary Alice (Mia Farrow) is viewing clashes violently with her safe world and instigates her to effect changes. The Kuleshov effect is also used in the subplot of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* as one of the techniques Clifford (Woody Allen) uses to construct an extremely deprecating image of his brother-in-law Lester (Alan Alda) in the documentary he was commissioned to make for him. In *Annie Hall*, in one of the early sequences of the film Annie (Diane Keaton) and Alvy (Woody Allen) pass by a movie theatre showing Alexander Dovzhenko's *Earth*. (*Zemlia*, 1930) While the shot can be treated as an instance of mere "name-dropping," Dovzhenko's lyricism blends in adequately in the warm and nostalgic Allen narrative.

In term of its diversity and eclecticism, Allen's fascination with Russia is comparable to his own creative activity. Varied in depth and motivation, it is, nevertheless, consistently present. The numerous instances in which Russian motifs or details can be identified in the earliest of Allen's written and cinematic works suggest that the Russian presence in his *oeuvre* is hardly merely an elitist whimsical turn of his artistic imagination.

NOTES

[1] As a source for this claim, Baxter refers us to Nancy Jo Sales's own account of the correspondence in "Woody and Me," *New York Magazine* 5 Apr 1995. Considering the fact that the epistolary exchange between them took place in 1978, the question arises how truthful Sales is two decades later, and invites legitimate suspicions whether she was not merely trying to capitalize on Allen's notoriety after the break-up with Mia Farrow.

[2] Since my focus is a study of Allen the writer and *auteur* rather than Allen the actor, I will not be analyzing such films as Martin Ritt's *The Front* (1976) or Paul Mazursky's *Scenes from a Mall* (1991) in which Allen starred but was not involved in any other way in its production. However, it is significant to note that critics and interpreters of these films do talk of a "Woody Allen spirit." For instance, for Sinyard *The Front* "seems a fascinating and far from marginal interlude in Woody Allen's writing and directing career" (45). The author relates Howard Prince, the character played by Allen, who "becomes an

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accidental celebrity, with initial benefits and later drawbacks" (45), to Leonard Zelig who has the same fate. This is a confirmation that, to some degree, Allen as a persona, both on- and off-screen, has transcended the objective control of his creator, Allen the individual.

[3] Notably, in his article Nasselroth provides a brief analysis specifically of this Allen short story (141).

[4] Real fictional names should not be confused with what Riffaterre calls "emblematic names, that is to say, patronymics with a meaning related to the part played by their bearer in a story" (*Text Production* 33). According to Riffaterre, an emblematic name, then, is not only "the most obvious hindrance to verisimilitude" (33), but it also "posits a truth, because it designates not a person but a type" (35). There are some subtler cases, however, where the character's name can possess some emblematic properties without entirely violating the illusion of verisimilitude: Allen's protagonist Alan Felix in *Play It Again, Sam* comes to mind.

[5] I am naturally aware of the fact that Nikolai Gogol's birthplace is in Ukraine and thus my discussion of him in a Russian literary context may seem objectionable. However, I believe my choice is justified based on two reason. First of all, apart from an early collection of short stories strongly influenced by Ukrainian tradition and folklore, Gogol wrote exclusively in Russian. In fact, he left Ukraine when he was twelve and never really returned. Moreover, his impact on the Russian literary tradition is unquestioned. My second justification for including Gogol in my discussion can be derived within the context of the centre/periphery cultural paradigm. Generally speaking, for Woody Allen as an American, i.e., an outsider, the European continent is much more homogeneous than it is perceived by the different European communities (cultural, ethnic, economic, etc.). From an American perspective, the primary binary opposition established is America *versus* Europe with a possible additional, secondary distinction of Western *versus* Eastern Europe. The greater geographical remoteness of the East and the existence of the former "Iron Curtain" partially

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account for the perception. And while there is no doubt as to Allen's acute sensitivity to European culture, his approach is more emotional than strictly rational or academic.

[6] It can be argued that Allen exploits the Armenian connection for comic purposes to signify otherness, non-Westernness. When he made his films, Armenia was part of the Soviet Union. Loosely, therefore, I am adding it to my discussion of the Russian layer. The intention is certainly not prompted by an insensitive, colonialist attitude, but rather to a pragmatic awareness of the cultural kinship between the various nations in the Soviet empire that is perceived to exist from the vantage point of the West. The basis for this homogenizing understanding is, of course, politically motivated.

[7] The explanation regarding Gogol is partly applicable in this case, as well. When Dovzhenko produced his cinematic works, Ukraine was politically and culturally subsumed by the Soviet ideology. In that sense, I assume Allen's evocation of Dovzhenko as yet another "Russian echo," in spite of the fact that the director is a Ukrainian, the film *Earth* is the third part of his silent Ukrainian trilogy. and there Dovzhenko uses intertitles in Ukrainian. Thus, like Allen's Armenian references, Dovzhenko is at least indirectly related to the Russian cultural semiosphere.

[8] Brode also sees a similarity and suggests that this futuristic image can be interpreted as Allen's "exaggerated nightmare vision of the L.A. lifestyle: beautiful, superficial people who think they are deep, who elevate kitsch to the level of high art ... and immerse themselves in immediate pleasures ... mindless escapism: it's just one step before fascism" (*Woody Allen: His Films and Career* 144). And Miles himself observes in a horrified manner: "What kind of government you got here? This is worse than California."

[9] The perception of Turgenev as an apolitical, amoral aesthete who sold out his soul to Western liberalism is reflected in the fact that Dostoevsky, for instance, based two characters in *The Possessed*, Karamzinov and the elder Verkhovensky, on such a view of the writer.

CHAPTER V

The Power of the Word in Gogol and Allen

> Humor as a system of communications and as a probe of our environment—of what's really going on—afford us our most appealing anti-environmental tool. It does not deal in theory, but in immediate experience, and is often the best guide to changing perceptions. Older societies thrived on purely literary plots. They demanded story lines. Today's humor, on the contrary, has no story line — no sequence. It is usually a compressed overlay of stories. (Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium Is the Massage* 92)

> That is the inescapable paradox of Woody Allen: American film's most brilliant comic artist is also a melancholy soul who takes little solace from his own success.... Instead of regaling a visitor with a stream of uproarious one-liners, the 50-year old director is more apt to launch into an elegant discourse on the senselessness of human existence. Even human existence with a penthouse view. (Farber Interview, qtd. in Spignesi 30)

From a chronological point of view, as if indeed by an uncanny Gogolian coincidence, Gogol, one of the earliest of the masters of the Russian prose narrative, appears in a number of Allen's early essays and some of his films. In spite of differences in their respective times, careers, and life paths, there are striking similarities between the styles of the two artists. Like Gogol, in his short stories and early films, Allen applies the same kind of absurdist poetics to create a surrealist atmosphere that reflects his at times mocking, at times bitterly critical attitude to the surrounding reality. In the process, both artists masterfully exploit and subvert genre conventions to achieve their zany and on the surface irrelevant, anti-realist vision. In his early story "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich" (*Mirgorod*), Gogol satirizes a trivial brawl between two friends, who, through the narrator's stylistic approach to their description, are presented as doubles. At the same time, the story provides an insightful commentary on the mores of Ukrainian life, ending on the famous, albeit sad, phrase: "It is boring in this world, Gentlemen" ("Skuchno zhit' na etom svete, gospoda"). In terms of genre, the text is a parody where "the very title is absurd: the length is self-defeating for its function as a title — it openly mocks eighteenth-century literary conventions" (Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol* 88).

A similar case can be made for Allen's first film, *What's New, Pussycat?*. The film follows the trials and tribulations of Victor (Woody Allen) who is conceived clearly as double and opposite of Michael (Peter O'Toole) and casts light on the theme of "'the little man' who continually fails in his efforts to seduce women" (Lee 15).[1] Throughout the film, there are a number of instances of "laying bare the device": the scene where Michael runs into Richard Burton (in an uncredited cameo appearance) in a bar and suggests that the two might know each other, which requires an extra-filmic cultural competence of the audience regarding the camaraderie between O'Toole and Burton as co-stars in Beckett; the scene where Rita (former Bond girl Ursula Andress) is presented by Victor as "a personal friend of James Bond"; the scene where Fassbender (Peter Sellers) courts Renée (Capucine), since it recalls the Sellers-Capucine relationship in *The Pink Panther*; the scene of Michael's Mastroiani-like appearance in black garb and whip which evokes Fellini's *8½*; the shot where the words "Author's Message" appear on the screen while Michael addresses the audience with the words, "Human fulfilment does not come from short physical random adventures, but from a deep relationship which is quite often right under one's very nose," spoofing didacticism in art, etc. This sense of overt exaggeration is reflected in Crowther's negative review of the film which complained that the actors "were allowed to do anything they wanted, say anything they wished, wear any kind of crazy costume, walk out whenever they pleased." Moreover, he accuses Allen of "too many imitative tricks" and "the most outrageously cluttered and campy, noisy and neurotic display of what is evidently intended as way-out slapstick."

The exaggerated Gogolian approach to reality is already present in Allen's early comic routines where Allen incessantly tells outrageous incidents that are artistic variations of different facets of his miserable life experience. The raw material for these early skits is Allen's childhood and adolescence in Brooklyn, his problems with his parents, his trouble with women, and his overall unenviable status as an outsider. Lax defines these jokes as "verbal cartoons" which are permeated by a "surreal, fantastic quality" while at the same time remaining "somewhat believable" (*On Being Funny* 6). According to Foster Hirsch,

> In Allen's comedy, the absurd and the surreal exert a continual pressure on the attempt to maintain order. Statements and actions that begin with an outward show of reasonableness topple from logic to lunacy, with characters, language, and the world collapsing amid the spiralling incongruities. Things, ideas, concepts are tossed together in bizarre combinations. (164)

One example that illustrates Hirsch's claim is Allen's satiric "Spring Bulletin" (*Getting Even*), a parody of university curricula. In it, Allen demonstrates comparatism in action in the section "Yeats and Hygiene, A Comparative Study" in which Yeats's poetry is "analyzed against a background of proper dental care" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 204). The purpose of the course devoted to "Rapid Reading" is to

> increase reading speed a little each day until the end of the term, by which time the student will be required to read *The Brothers Karamazov* in fifteen minutes. The method is to scan the page and eliminate everything except pronouns from one's field of vision. Soon the pronouns are eliminated. Gradually the student is encouraged to nap. A frog is dissected. Spring comes. People marry and die. Pinkerton does not return. (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 202)

While the overt reference to Dostoevsky's novel is the source for healthy, unmitigated laughter, it is the indirect invocation of Gogol's story "The Overcoat" that gives the piece its subtler characteristics. Allen's references to non-meaningful grammatical parts of speech recall one of the unforgettable "little men" of world literature, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, and his utter inability to achieve any kind of consequential communication:

> It might be as well to explain at once that Akaky mostly talked in prepositions, adverbs, and lastly, such parts of speech as have no meaning whatsoever. If the matter was rather difficult, he was in the habit of not finishing the sentences, so that often having begun his speech with, "This is — er — you know...a bit of that, you know..." he left it at that, forgetting to finish the sentence in the belief that he had said all that was necessary.
>
> (Gogol, The *Overcoat and Other Tales* 243)

Allen's concern with the Gogolian theme that essence is drowned by form as a powerful social façade emerges again in Allen's "Fabulous Tales and Mythical Beasts" (*Without Feathers*). One of the "fabulous tales" deals with Emperor Ho Sin who has a dream in which he possesses a palace that is bigger than his but for which he pays half the rent. In addition, the Emperor's body becomes young again while his head paradoxically remains "somewhere between sixty-five and seventy" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 94). What is even more bizarre is that his attempt to enter the palace proves futile because Ho Sin opens one door which leads to another and to another, until "he realized he had entered a hundred doors and was now out in the backyard" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 94). Just like Akaky Akakievich, who has nothing — "no dependents, no extravagances, not even any amusements" (Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol* 142) — the Emperor, who is paying rent, ends up with nothing. The poverty of both protagonists is absurd: "it is presented hyperbolically" (Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol* 142). On the verge of despair, Ho Sin is visited by a nightingale who sings to him a beautiful song and then bites him on the nose. The Emperor then looks into a mirror but fails to see his reflection; instead, he sees a double of sorts by the name of Mandell Goldblatt who accuses him "of taking his overcoat" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 94). From the experience Ho Sin learns the secret of life: "Never to yodel" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 94).

In this short play, Allen manages an ingenious blend of what are usually considered two of Gogol's most celebrated stories, "The Overcoat" and "The Nose." The attention to detail, the ironic commentary on the value that society lavishes on form without content, as well as the motif of the stolen overcoat, all point to Gogol's story which inspired the famous — even if apocryphal — statement attributed to Dostoevsky, "We all come from Gogol's 'Overcoat.'"[2] The motifs of the dream and the Emperor's bitten nose, as well as the stylistics of the convoluted circular ending, recall Gogol's celebrated story "The Nose" defined by Simon Karlinsky as the "most logic-defying piece of writing in Russian literature to this day" (129).

Gogol's two celebrated stories indirectly resonate in "The Metterling Lists" (*Getting Even*). In addition to the fact that the entire piece is built on *non-sequiturs* and the absurd disparate conjoining of different themes and linguistic registers so typical of Gogol, Allen further exploits the cross-cultural literary competence of his readers. The text is structured as a review of a newly published book consisting of detailed laundry lists of Metterling's attire which lead to deep "philosophical" digressions on his works. While the "overcoat motif" is not directly invoked, the underlying idea that the exterior — clothes — define one's identity, becomes the target of Allen's mockery. Similarly, subtly nodding to Gogol, he discusses Metterling's paranoia regarding "a government plot to steal [not his nose, but] his chin" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 147). The result is a parody with an original flavour. The author takes Gogol's texts as his point of departure, but in the process of narration introduces his own personal style.

In its essence, "The Nose" is a text full of contradictions, negations, and incomprehensibility. Even the facts around its inception remain somewhat elusive. Partly inspired by Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, partly by the popularity of the nose motif in literature, the story's original title was "Son" — "dream" in Russian — but then some critics playfully suggested to the writer that the inverted order of the letters rendered "Nos" — the Russian word for "nose." There is no absolute confirmation of the validity of the story — something that adds to the overall ambiguity and the refusal of Gogol's highly unreliable, digressive narrator to furnish straight-forward answers. Kent suggests that "Gogol was probably dissatisfied with working *merely* on the dream level, and by transposing the dream to St. Petersburg reality, caused what was fantastic to become, in its realistic frame of reference, grotesque and satiric as well" ("Introduction" xxxiii).

Gogol's "Nose" is masterfully appropriated by Allen who has several variations on the subject and proves that the Russian writer's scope transgresses the narrow ethnic boundaries. In his mock historical narrative of the early years of organized crime in America ("A Look at Organized Crime," *Getting Even*), the Irish gangster is killed "when the Squillante Construction Company decided to erect their new offices on the bridge of his nose" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 154). In the pseudo-journalistic piece "The UFO Menace" (*Side Effects*), the strange world in which Akaky Akakievich's nose can roam in full uniform is transplanted on American soil, to Shropshire, while the nose itself, metamorphosed into a "cigar-shaped object" becomes a source of sheer terror for its owner, Chester Ramsbottom who, in spite of "all his evasive actions could not lose it, since it was attached to his face" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 328). In a typically Allenesque twist of irreverence, the nose provokes much aggravation and embarrassment for the entire nation since General Memling also becomes fixated on Sir Chester's nose, "an occurrence that caused consternation in the Air Force and eventually led to General Memling's court-martial" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 329). In passing, it is also worth mentioning that both Gogol and Allen seem to revel in the choice of names for their rather pathetic protagonists.

In the story about Emperor Ho Sin, Allen not only violates the protagonist's nose, but at the end he also imitates Gogol's confused narrator. The intentional lack of a stable point of reference allows for "The Nose" to be interpreted either as a joke or as the fantasy of a dream. The narrator himself admits that he simply does not know "what to make of it" (Gogol, *The Overcoat and Other Tales* 232). It may be an absurdity or it may be reality. After all, he ends on a most ambiguous note: "Say what you like, but such things do happen — not often, but they do happen" (Gogol, *The Overcoat and Other Tales* 232). Likewise, in Allen's story the ending seems to subvert the logic of the narrative to the point that it remains unclear whether it is just a dream, the dream is still in progress, or it is altogether someone else's dream: "When the emperor awoke he was in a cold sweat and couldn't recall if he dreamed the dream or was now in a dream being dreamt by his bail bondsman" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 94).

"Oedipus Wrecks," Allen's contribution to the omnibus film *New York Stories* — with two other two segments by Francis Coppola ("Life without Zoe") and Martin Scorsese ("Life Lessons") — in a way can be defined as meeting point where Gogolian form fuses with Freudian content.[3] Like Gogol's stories belonging to his St. Petersburg cycle, Allen adds "Oedipus Wrecks" to the collection of films where New York is a unifying theme: *Annie Hall*, *Manhattan*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, etc. This one, however, is not a mere poem to the city he worships, but a "faible psychanalytique" (Jousee 74) which foregrounds New York as "la cité imaginaire, la Babylone des temps modernes" (72). In general, the film did not receive complimentary reviews, but Allen's contribution to the anthology was considered superior to the other two. The plot is fairly simple and derived from an early Allen story: a New York lawyer, Sheldon Mills (Woody Allen) is dating a non-Jewish *divorcée* Lisa (Mia Farrow), contrary to his mother's wishes. In an attempt to compromise he takes his mother Sadie (Mae Questel) and his fiancée to a magic show, where inexplicably Sadie disappears. Free from her intrusive presence, Sheldon is a new man until one morning, out of the blue, Sadie's head — like Akaky's nose — reappears in the sky. From there she bullies him and embarrasses him before the entire city by telling stories of his childhood. Order is restored only when Sheldon gives up Lisa for Treva (Julie Kavner), "the nice Jewish girl" his mother had always wanted for him.

In his review of the film Combs establishes a link of continuity of the film's problematic and form with other surrealist efforts by Allen, all of which are traced to his early beginnings as a writer:

> ...the most successful of the three tales ("Oedipus Wrecks") is directed by Woody Allen. This may have something to do with the fact that Allen has become less cinematic, the more accomplished he has become as a film-maker, determinedly preserving his roots not only in New York, but in *The New Yorker* sketch from which he began.... If this is a classic *New Yorker* Allen, it might seem dismayingly old-fashioned in terms of his career, a return to *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex*. But the "mother in the sky" is also akin to the movie conceits of the later Allen, to the absconding screen hero of *The Purple Rose of Cairo* or the compulsively assimilating one of *Zelig*. Into these sophisticated effects, the movies themselves disappear, leaving in their place their creator's elemental fears of non-existence, non-acceptance....
>
> ("Gift of the Magi" 279)

Combs's last comments are equally applicable both to Gogol's insignificant characters and to the writer himself, with his constant worries of whether he has been successful in transmitting his message and gaining artistic respectability.

The motif of magic as a power beyond mere illusion in "Oedipus Wrecks" brings to mind one of Allen's most celebrated stories, "The Kugelmass Episode." In it, the unhappily married professor of humanities Kugelmass escapes the numbing routine and enters the world of Flaubert's

Madame Bovary aided by the mysterious magician, the Great Persky. After the excitement of his affair with the heroine, things turn sour when Emma is transported into Kugelmass's New York reality and eventually begins nagging him as much as his two "real" wives. The ending is ambiguous and devoid of any kind of a rational explanation. While transporting the protagonist into *Portnoy's Complaint*, Persky has a heart attack and dies. Kugelmass ends up forever stuck in the fictional world of books. Unfortunately — real happy endings with real closure are never possible with Allen, or Gogol for that matter — he is thrust into an old textbook of *Remedial Spanish*. The last glimpse we catch of him is "running for his life over a barren, rocky terrain as the word *tener* ('to have') — a large and hairy irregular verb — raced after him on its spindly legs" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 360).

The ending to "The Shallowest Man" once more highlights the narrator's refusal to provide absolute closure to the story of Mandel's infatuation with the hospital nurse: "Who cares what the point of the story is? If it even has a point. It was an entertaining anecdote. Let's order" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 426). In fact, Allen gives a cinematic rendition of the narrative structure of "The Shallowest Man" in his 1985 *Broadway Danny Rose*. The film is composed as a long flashback sequence recalled by a group of comics sitting around a table at the Carnegie Deli on Seventh Avenue in Manhattan. They all contribute their fragmented memories about Danny Rose (Woody Allen) — the American transmutation of a Gogolian character, if there ever was one. Danny's story is "structured as a tall tale, a little man's story in a big man's narrative form" (Pogel 193). Danny Rose is an unsuccessful comedian who has become a small-scale manager with a series of clients who can only be defined by one word: losers. They are

> carnival figures, so sadly, grotesquely real they seem unreal. They include a blind xylophone player, a one-legged tap dancer, a man with a trained penguin that performs dressed as a rabbi and a bird that pecks out "September Song" on the piano, a balloon-folding act, a cheerful

> woman who plays tunes on the rims of water glasses, and Canova, an overweight singer with a big ego, a temperament, a drinking problem, and two ex-wives. (Pogel 194)

There is also Tina (Mia Farrow), Canova's zany mistress, who is very much at the mercy of a Mafia-like family run with an iron fist by a ruthless Godmother (Gina De Angelis). Trying to help his client Canova (Nick Apollo Forte), Danny becomes emotionally involved with Tina and is almost eliminated by her vindictive ex-boyfriend, Johnny Rispoli (Edwin Bordo).

On the level of American filmic texts, the Mafia theme establishes an intertextual dialogue with Coppola's *The Godfather* (see Pogel 195-200). Yet, on a more global level, the character types in *Broadway Danny Rose* can be placed alongside Gogol's gallery of freaks.[4] In fact, according to Henderson, this Allen character "has joined the freaks" (48), while Canby calls him "a mysterious character of flawed nobility ... [who] deals with Fate's droppings" ("Runyonesque but Pure Woody Allen"). In terms of its composition, there is an unceasing tension between fact and fiction, cinematic and extra-textual reality. As Pogel points out,

> The frame is a device that establishes the credibility of the story (the comedians are real-life figures who would be likely to have inside knowledge about someone in their business) but also undermines the reliability of the tale because it is told by people who deal in fictions and jokes. Moreover, the comedians' opening conversation alludes to changing audience reactions.... This is another of Allen's allusions to his critics and his audiences, but it also suggests that the selective perceptions of both spectator and the teller are implicated in coloring reality so that truth and fiction in Danny Rose's story are subject to multiple, complex perspectives. Since the tellers are real-life comedians who come out of the same background as Woody Allen (who also plays Danny Rose), the film world and the realistic frame merge with life

> outside the film. As if to emphasize the polysemantic nature of the frame, Allen's producer and manager, Jack Rollins, known in the industry for his personal management and concern for clients (some of whom left him when they became successful), is one of the group, and Danny Rose's story becomes a remembrance of the personal management Allen himself enjoyed outside the film. (192)

Before *Broadway Danny Rose*, Allen alludes to Gogol's story "The Nose" in *Sleeper*. In the course of the struggle to overthrow the Leader, Miles and Luna are involved in a complex ploy to kidnap his nose. It is the only genetic remnant of him after a semi-successful attempt by the revolutionaries on his life. In the technologically advanced society of the future, however, it proves to be sufficient material for the scientists to clone a replica of the dictator. Eventually, the daring couple manages to penetrate the laboratory and by impersonating scientists they are able to kidnap the nose. In the end, the nose is destroyed in a typically Gogolian manner: by the denial of its shape. Miles literally flattens it out by running over it with a steamroller, by eliminating the form.

In his article "Common Themes in Gogol's 'Nos' and Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*," Douglas Stenberg establishes an unexpected thematic kinship between the two works that goes deeper than the surface name-dropping Allen scholars and critics usually touch upon. The author demonstrates that although the plots of the two texts are quite divergent, they are at the same time "fundamentally similar in that the unlikelihood of a movie character leaving the silver screen, thereby creating havoc in a small New Jersey town during the Great Depression, echoes the 'impossibility' of a nose impersonating a nineteenth century St. Petersburg official" (109). Other motifs shared by the two texts are "mistaken identities, chases, and pivotal scenes of self-recognition in churches" (109). The unifying ideological component that brings the two authors together, however, is the idea of laughter through tears, in other words, "the broadening of comedy towards the acceptance of life's pain with laughter as the means to transcend problems and failures" (109).

Both Gogol's story and Allen's film confront us with a protagonist — Kovalyov and Gil Shepherd (Jeff Daniels) — and their respective alter egos — the Nose and Tom Baxter (Jeff Daniels).[5] Gogol follows his traditional poetics of substituting the essence for the form, a technique he brings to perfection in "The Overcoat," and animating the inanimate. Allen reinterprets the device by choosing to obliterate the boundary between illusion and reality. In both cases a dream world forcefully interrupts the logic of the sordid reality and opens possibilities for an alternative sequence of events.

In a sense, the protagonists' doubles live out the protagonists' desires and represent their better versions. Kovalyov's nose attains a status of respectability that is beyond the reach of his pathetic owner, thus proving that "psychologically, the part can be greater than the whole" (Peace 131, qtd. in Stenberg 111). Following a similar logic, the fictional and emotionally limited Tom Baxter is nobler and — ironically — more human than the "real" actor who has become desensitized by careerism.

The theme of the double leads to the adjacent theme of the impostor/impersonator. The notion of impersonation as a manifestation of the clash between appearance and essence underscores a number of works by Gogol: "Viy," "Diary of a Madman" ("Zapiski sumasshedchego"), "The Nevsky Prospect" ("Nevskii prospekt"), *The Inspector General* (*Revizor*). Allen, too, approaches the subject both ideologically and visually. In his early films the cinematic rendition is heavily dependent on the use of masks and disguises. Such is the case in *Take the Money and Run*, *Bananas*, and *Sleeper*. Later on, the director's approach becomes more subtle and broad slapstick is substituted by more understated solutions that conform to Allen's gradual darkening philosophical vision. Thus, while in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* there is an ironic twist contained in the premise that the impostor is better than the "original," in other works the impostor's social or personal success reflects Allen's pessimism with regards to the dominant values of society. The notion of the impostor brings forth the concern of appearance and essence, illusion and reality. In *The Purple Rose of Cairo,* this idea finds its visualization in the scene of the encounter between the naive Tom Baxter and the prostitute (Dianne Wiest). The deflation of Tom's noble intentions is reminiscent of Gogol's story "Nevsky Prospect" where there is a similar clash between chimera and actuality represented by the artist's desire for a beautiful woman as an ideal, who in the end turns out to be a prostitute.[6]

These ideas are subtly hinted at already in such films as *Play It Again, Sam* (Allan and Bogart), *Annie Hall* (Alvy and Rob), *Manhattan* (Isaac and Yale), *Hannah and Her Sisters* (Mickey and his former partner), and they permeate one of the subplots in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* through the clash between Cliff (Woody Allen) and Lester (Alan Alda). Yet, one of Allen's most eloquent statements about the nature of the impostor is found in his technically superb *Zelig*. In some respects, Leonard Zelig can be treated as the twentieth-century American counterpart of the notorious Khlestakov (*The Inspector General*). Thus, one of the dominant ideological gestures that can be identified in Gogol's and Allen's creative works is carnivalization.

In his monograph on Gogol's poetics, Iurii Mann claims that the Bakhtinian notion of carnival should be viewed as the key concept in the investigation of Gogol's artistic universe (*Poetika Gogolia* 5). The principle of the carnivalesque as theorized by Bakhtin in his seminal work, *Rabelais and His World* (*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'a i Renessansa*), consists in a specific type of popular culture of laughter that over the centuries has exerted a strong influence in art and literature. Through carnival hierarchies are overturned and social classes obliterated, conventions and restrictions disregarded, the marginalized for once gain a centralized position, ultimately, laughter wins a victory over death. In short, the essence of carnivalesque culture is based on the total ambivalence and the mutual interchangeability of top/high and bottom/low.

According to Bakhtin, the carnival as presented in Rabelais is basically a manifestation of a revolution carried out by the collectivity. This is the time when the fool can "legitimately" become a pope and the simpleton may be transformed into a king. Moreover, this metamorphosis is not only justified but generated and accomplished by the folk collective body. Bakhtin's study of Rabelais is a study about Laughter. Yet, in spite of the fact that everywhere he uses the word "laughter," within the overall philosophical core of Bakhtin's theory, the term clearly signifies the more global idea of total optimism. The essence of this optimism is found in the idea of the uninterruptedness and immortality of life in its collective manifestation. Bakhtin connects two irreconcilable notions — laughter and death: "*death* is inseparable from *laughter*" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 196; emphasis in the original). He declares the Rabelaisian derision of death and consequently his strong belief in perpetual life and the future ahead. Bakhtin inherits Rabelais's idea of "the grotesque folk image of pregnant old age and birth-giving death. Rabelais' picture stresses the uninterrupted but contradictory unity of the vital process, which does not cease on death, but on the contrary triumphs in it, for death is life's rejuvenation" (*Rabelais and His World* 405). In this sense, any death is beneficial to the collective body since it renovates the vital juices in it. Rabelais' ideas of optimism and immortality bring forward the issue of historical progress. Man is declared the master of the universe. "The starry sky is ... contained in man himself ... [who bears] the new awareness of the cosmos as man's own home, holding no terror for him" (*Rabelais and His World* 361, 365). Rabelais' characters do not merely exist, but they live productively; in other words, they master the space and time they are situated in.

Bakhtin further connects the ideas of the expansion and development of the collective human body and historical progress with the idea of perpetual struggle. The notion of the struggle as manifested in its manifold aspects — between high and low, man and nature, life and death, lent and the breaking of fasting, hunger and feasting, thirst and drinking, sex and abstinence, etc. — and its invariably optimistic outcome strikes through as the basic leitmotiv of Bakhtin's study of Rabelais. The carnivalesque in turn foregrounds a new type of social relations and human interaction. Taking as a point of departure the violation of the social and moral rules and conventions and the levelling of the vertical axis of hierarchies along a horizontal line, carnival opens up the possibility for the establishment and mutually acceptable co-existence of a chorus of social discourses. The co-existence of multiple voices is directly correlated to the degree of subversion of the official, hegemonic ideology: in other words, the greater the variety of discourses, the stronger the subversive mechanism. On the level of genres, the outcome is varying degree of parody: from mild ridicule to bitter grotesque.

In this context, Gogol's *The Inspector General* is an excellent example of the carnivalesque in action. At first glance, it appears to follow the conventional mould of a comedy built on the clichéd premise of mistaken identity. The plot of the play is quite straightforward: Khlestakov, a civil servant from St. Petersburg is mistaken by the population of a small town for a government inspector; the impostor decides to capitalize on the mix-up and takes money from the mayor, flirts with his wife, makes arrangements to marry his daughter. Eventually, the arrival of a letter discloses Khlestakov's fraud. The final scene takes place on the marketplace — the locus of carnival — and possesses all the characteristics of a public scandal. Gogol does not provide much realistic motivation to justify the mix-up. On the contrary, as with his other stories, he explores the absurdity of the situation to its extreme. He intentionally foregrounds the fact that it is beyond comprehension how the impostor is able to dupe the entire population so easily.

Interestingly enough, in the directions to the actors Gogol makes it clear that he conceives Khlestakov neither as a hero nor as a villain. Rather, he is "the sort of self-satisfied nonentity we have already met in Lieutenant Pirogov" (Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol* 163). And — one might add — we will meet later in Leonard Zelig. There are other small details that reinforce the Gogolian link. At the beginning of Allen's film, when the phenomenon of the human chameleon is being presented to the audience by means of numerous examples of bizarre occurrences, the authoritative narrator (Patrick Horgan) recalls the strange sequence of events in "The Overcoat":

> Narrator's voice: Police are investigating the disappearance of a clerk named Leonard Zelig. Both his landlady and his employer have reported him missing.... They tell the police he was an odd little man who kept to himself. Only two clues are found in Zelig's Greenwich flat ... one a photograph of Zelig with Eugene O'Neill ... and one of him as Pagliacci.
>
> (*Three Films of Woody Allen* 13)

The absurd stories that Khlestakov tells about his life in St. Petersburg establish another level of kinship between him and Zelig. Through the personal stories of these two characters, the two common themes of the works emerge: the "psychological theme of 'identity' and the social theme of 'microcosm'" (Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol* 164). An implicit causal relationship is established between the ludic games of adaptation that the protagonists are forced to play in order to survive in an environment that is conditioned by pretenses of ritual, rank, or race.

What is even more disturbing in terms of social criticism, intended or not, in both texts is the fact that there is no bad faith on the part of either Khlestakov or Zelig in the course of their misrepresentation. Through the testimony of a number of authoritative voices transplanted from extra-textual reality into the cinematic text, we are told that all Zelig wants is "to belong," to be accepted by society. Similarly, Khlestakov does not really *intend* to deceive anyone. He plays the role of the inspector unknowingly, without even realizing the fact. It is only towards the middle of Act IV that he begins to suspect that somehow he is being seen by the others as an important representative of the state.[7]

In his discussion of carnival, Bakhtin talks about the presence of gross exaggerations that culminate in the grotesque and the *fantastique*. Functionally, it is a strategy employed to present the discourse of a particular participant in carnival and historical progress. This participant is completely integrated in the chronotope of the public square/market place and in general uses the imagery and terminology that corresponds to this world. In other words, Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of unconditional participation. Only in this complete immersion into the world of the public square can the realization of the individual's emergence be achieved. *The Inspector General* can be viewed as a text permeated by the grotesque, a term that Mann uses generously in his close reading of the play (*Poetika Gogolia* 170-266). The effect is achieved through the closely-knit interplay of its participants, who do not merely represent a gallery of types, but in effect "cement" the cohesion of Gogol's artistic universe ("*Revizor* ne tol'ko vyiavliaet kharaktery; on imi stsementirovan," Mann, *Poetika Gogolia* 254). A concurrent movement towards becoming is observed in Allen's film, as well. As Ruth Perlmutter states in her article "*Zelig* according to Bakhtin," "the guilts and moral consciousness that promote Zelig's multiple personalities and male crisis are resolved when he achieves the Hollywood happy ending" (Curry 79). Later, in her discussion, she stresses that the actual trajectory along which the "human chameleon" undergoes his "organic" growth is through parodic hybridization: "Literally 'built' through editing, Zelig is *the* motivated line, *the* carrier of motion and emotion, *the* example of how a character becomes a metonymic linear structuring device in classical movies" (Curry 82; emphasis in the original).

From a Bakhtinian perspective, Khlestakov and Zelig become a self "through a process of linguistic hybridization ... by acquiring ambient languages and finally forging a kind of personal synthesis" (Stam, "From Dialogism to *Zelig*" 214). These languages — familial, bureaucratic, slang, journalese, etc. — intersect and affect one another until an assimilation is achieved where the individual's words are fused with the words of others. From an ideological point of view, Khlestakov and Zelig each "represent the person who has lost all capacity to distinguish between his own and the alien word" (Stam, "From Dialogism to *Zelig*" 214), the quintessence of chameleonism as the extreme outcome of carnival. Allen achieves a similar synthesis of voices and discourses in a more realistic, if not more plausible, setting in *Broadway Danny Rose*, another film where the notion of carnival is implemented to the utmost thanks to the plethora of characters and the full-blooded relationships they are engaged in. As Henderson points out in his review of the film,

> None of his other films has a gallery of faces like this — or voices. The earlier films are filled with the chatter of Allen and his leading ladies.... In *Broadway Danny Rose*, for the first time, the director seems to listen. Each of the characters — the seven comedians of the framing story, Danny, Danny's clients, Philly the resort owner, Tina, Lou, Lou's wife, Angelina the fortune teller, the "poet," the "poet's" mother and two brothers, Barney Dunne — even the counterman at the Carnegie Delicatessen whose face we never see — speaks in a distinctive way, mixing individual and regional qualities. The result is a kind of vocal map of the New York City area, with emphasis on the diversity of characters and their voices, indeed on the specific grain of each voice and the pleasure of listening to it. Narcissism overcome, difference proliferates. (48)

The analysis of Gogol and Allen through the Bakhtinian prism of the carnivalesque highlights another common element that brings the two artists together on the level of stylistics: the importance of the Word for both of them. In a collection of essays symptomatically entitled *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word*, Cathy Popkin pays particular attention to Gogol's "distended discourse" (185) and his "verbal prodigality" (196). When McCann analyzes the composition of Allen's films in relation to those of the Marx Brothers, he comes to the similar conclusion that "Allen's early movies reflect the Marx Brothers in their *structure*: the storyline is treated with irreverence, forever being invaded and distracted by visual and verbal gigs" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 71). In general, one of the most frequent definitions of Allen's creative imagination focusses on his preference for "bizarre, surrealistic verbal images that induce laughter because of their strangeness" (Spignesi 98). McCann notes that in Allen's artistic universe, "the Book is the highest form of cultural achievement. Everyone seems to be reading, writing, or trying to write, the Big Book" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 170). Moreover, he highlights the fact that Allen "plays with the *physicality* of words, finding humour even in the look of language" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 57), a qualification that carries equal validity in the case of Gogol. Similarly, just like Gogol, Allen employs the same stylistic strategies of "verbal surprise, placing isolated words or phrases into inappropriate contexts" in order to deflate pretentiousness (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 58). In connection with his one-liners, Benayoun elaborates that they let him have the last word which he can choose to use "in an assertive or a cajoling manner. This consummate art of *cadence* permits him to give his inventiveness a rhythm ... and allows him control of what one could call the 'word-blender,' the better to deploy his effects" (24).

One of the recurrent criticisms of Allen's early films has to do with the fact that he is not "cinematic" enough, that his early comedy is intended for reading or hearing rather than watching, since the ideas themselves are funny and, thus, their actual visualization at times becomes superfluous.[8] At this stage, Allen's written humour is only "*transferred* to the screen, it has yet to be *transformed*" (McCann, *Woody Allen: New Yorker* 70; emphasis in the original). Benayoun explains this trait with the fact that "before he gave his films their own distinctive look ... Woody had been known as a 'voice,' or, rather, a whole conversation piece. What's undeniable is that the 'word' came first" (23). With his maturation as a film-maker, however, Allen gradually is able to transplant his distinct verbal style in the visual medium. Since at the basis of this style is the unification of incongruous images, his cinematic works possess the distinct quality of being able to bring together with ease the most far-fetched and irreconcilable truths.

Very often this penchant for talk for the sake of talking rather than reaching a well-motivated goal is reflected in Gogol's distinct preference for the stylistic device that Boris Eikhembaum defines as *skaz*.[9] In essence, *skaz* is a narrational strategy that aims at rendering as closely as possible the illusion of unmediated, living speech. In texts where the narration is presented as *skaz*, the author's presence is entirely effaced and substituted for a first-person narrator whose set of beliefs and value system are transparently clear. Keys illustrates this point using as an example Gogol's narrators in six of the eight tales in his *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka* cycle: "no values are implied beyond those of the *skaz* narrators who themselves believe in the actual existence of the numerous spirits and demons appearing in the stories" (100). In Allen's story "Confessions of a Burglar" (*Side Effects*), the author uses the confessional mode to create an absurd world to which we have access solely through the unmediated discourse of Virgil Ives, a criminal "currently serving the first of four consecutive ninety-nine-year sentences for various felonies" who plans "on working with children when he gets out" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 469), and who is the literary prototype of Virgil Starkwell (Woody Allen) from *Take the Money and Run*. Functionally, one of the results of using a *skaz* narrator is a recuperation of the *plaisir du texte* since "the reader is drawn into the charmed circle of the *skaz*, accepts, with one part of the mind at least, the reliability of what is being told, temporarily suspends disbelief ... and thus imperceptibly becomes part of 'that world where such things do happen'" (Shukman 68).

Allen employs *skaz* as a basic strategy in another story in the confessional mode, "The Lunatic's Tale," which already in its title is reminiscent of Gogol's "Diary of a Madman." Furthermore, the direct address to the "dear reader" adds on additional layers of intertextual dialogism. Although, the composition and plot development of the two works vary considerably in content and in length, the occurrences described in each case are as absurd as they are candid. In both texts, the explanatory titles impose a frame on the inner stories and essentially carnivalize them. The paradox is explained perfectly in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. If you are crazy, you are not responsible; to avoid responsibility, you must prove that you are not crazy, but you have to do it yourself; yet, as soon as you do it, you are actually proving that you are *not* crazy — no crazy person would admit the fact voluntarily. Thus, in "Diary of a Madman" and "The Lunatic's Tale" the paratext becomes the semiotic marker that warns the reader to be careful, not to be taken in by the apparent transparency of the naïve discourse.

The narrative structure of "A Diary of a Madman" can be compared with Allen's *Alice*. In the film, Allen focuses on one particular character, Alice (Mia Farrow), and using various narrative and cinematic devices, he manages to construct the wearisome and fragmented nature of her world. The reality of events is constantly undermined by an intentional violation of their chronological sequence. The initial encounter with Joe (Joe Mantegna) is told in flashback and the opening sequence of the embrace turns out to be a daydream. Occurrences throughout the film are imagined, remembered, or recounted in voice-over narration. There is a surreal meeting between Alice and her muse (Bernadette Peters), a detail that further subverts the reliability of the narration.

In his review of the film, Romney stresses that Allen manages to recreate a very strong presence of the city which the spectator as if rediscovers while following the events and setting through Alice's eyes. According to the critic, the "pleasures if the city are a reminder that *Alice* is not just a variation of Lewis Carroll's tale of shape-changing innocent; it also has a touch of *The Wizard of Oz* ... with a useful moral for jaded urbanites: 'There's no place like home'"(38). The *deus-ex-machina*-like ending of the film, however, invites an alternative, less romantic reading that subtly nods to Gogol. Through the deliberately subjective narrative perspective and the numerous incidents that border on the *fantastique*, an intertextual dimension is established with Gogol's story "Nevsky Prospect." Having recounted the two bizarre mirror stories, Gogol ends his tale with a kind of a tribute to the street that bears the title of the text.

> But strangest of all are the incidents that take place on Nevsky Avenue. Oh, do not trust that Nevsky Avenue! I always wrap myself up more closely in my cloak when I walk along it and do my best not to look at

> the things I pass. For all is deceit, all is a dream, all is not what it seems.... It lies at all times, does Nevsky Avenue, but most of all when night hovers over it in a thick mass, picking out the white from the dun-coloured houses, and all the town thunders and blazes with lights, and thousands of carriages come driving from the bridges, the outriders shouting and jogging up and down on their horses, and when the devil himself lights all the street lamps to show everything in anything but its true colours. (201-02)

Alice's miraculous transformation after her elliptical pilgrimage to India allow for a potential darker interpretation of the film's ending as a temporary resolution, a contrived finale which has not brought real closure to Alice's quest for self-examination. This more ironic view of the film and of Allen's vision is validated by the director himself who defines his concept as "a whimsical, non-realistic contemporary comedy about a wife who goes through a remarkable set of experiences at a critical point of her life" (qtd. in Fox 208).

Beyond its particular plotline, "Diary of a Madman" is a work that synthesizes the quintessential feature of Nikolai Gogol: his laughter through tears. It is "a work that manages to be simultaneously Gogol's most touching tragedy and his funniest comedy" (Karlinsky 122). Karlinsky goes on to summarize the mechanisms of hybridization that give it its quality of a multi-voiced chorus of intersecting discourses that are only superficially unified by the monovalent perspective of *skaz*:

> The delicious mini-parodies, scattered throughout the story, can be perceived only on repeated readings: the parody of police investigation novels ("I need to have a dog with your little dog"); of the literary critics who demand a human-interest angle at all costs ("Give me a human being! I want to see a human being, I require spiritual nourishment that would sustain and delight my soul," Poprishchin exclaims, disgusted at having to read about Madgie's canine love affairs); and of the editorial

> style of commenting on current political affairs ("England will not tolerate such and such, France has such and such interests to consider, etc."). Not the least remarkable things about "Diary of a Madman" is that this tale, told by a madman and a dog, contains some of Gogol's most believable and real human beings, including the dogs. (122)

In many of his works, Allen seems to have transposed Karlinsky's assessment of Gogol's style to his texts where a similar linguistic *bricolage* can be seen in frenetic action.

The implementation of *skaz* then actualizes another, counterdirected, narratological outcome: namely, the acute awareness of the reader that he/she is being presented with created fiction. In other words, *skaz* is as linked to the metafictional dimension of literature as it is removed from it. This paradoxical situation once again establishes a much closer connection between Gogol and Allen than it seems at first glance. As Donald Fanger points out, Gogol's prose has been able "as nearly as possible to demonstrate the power of a medium without a message.... His best works are ultimately self-reflexive and ultimately 'about' the nature of their own literary being" (*The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* 23). As far as Allen is concerned, one of the most obvious aspects of his art to be commented on by scholars and critics is the self-reflexive quality of his films, from *What's New, Pussycat?* to *Celebrity*. The same statement is equally applicable to his prose which would be utterly incomprehensible if taken at face value, without an acute awareness of the cultural context and the multitude of antecedent and contemporary co-texts that each Allen text is built on.

The leitmotif of the life *versus* art dichotomy underscores all of Allen's films. On the level of his cinematic technique, it is manifested in the recurrent interplay of reflexivity *versus* illusionism. In his book *Reflexivity in Film and Literature*, Robert Stam connects reflexivity to the modernist sensibility:

> Countless modernist antiheroes see life as simply "bad literature" or "bad cinema." We are all secretly agreed, claims Dostoevsky's

> Underground Man, that real life is a chore, and that things are better in literature. Godard's Marianne in *Pierrot le Fou* echoes him: "What makes me sad," she laments, "is that we can't live in life the way we can in novels." Life, she goes on to explain, lacks the order, harmony, and logic encountered in works of fiction. (9)

To this, Allen's Alvy Singer in *Annie Hall* will add, "You know, you know how you're always tryin' t' get things to come out perfectly in art because, uh, it's real difficult in life" (*Four Films of Woody Allen* 102), while for the sake of pure art Cheech (Chazz Palmintieri) in *Bullets Over Broadway* will use Chekhov's celebrated rifle with tragic consequences in life .

Reflexivity as a gesture that "points to its own mask and invites the public to examine its design and texture" (Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature* 1) is a universal property of art. Yet, it becomes foregrounded specifically in the modernist period when "discontinuity becomes programmatic and rather aggressive ... [and] Interruption pre-empts spectacle; in fact, it *becomes* spectacle" (7; emphasis in the original). Patricia Waugh, in her discussion of metafictional novels, adds that reflexivity "also reflects a greater awareness within contemporary culture of the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday 'reality.' The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world is no longer tenable" (3).

For Waugh there is a clear distinction between reflexivity in modernist writing and the metafictional mode of post-modernist writers. And while her discussion pertains to the domain of the novel, her definition of the modernist *versus* the post-modernist sensibility is valuable, insofar as Allen is concerned. For Waugh, "Modernism aimed at the impossible task of exploring pure consciousness" (27), while "Post-modernism does not involve the modernist concern with the mind as itself the basis of an aesthetic, ordered at a profound level and revealed to consciousness as isolated 'epiphanic' moments" (23). Ultimately,

> In modernist fiction ... the reader may be *temporarily* dislocated when point of view ... is shifted, but is allowed to reorient him or herself to the new perspective and recontextualize each new piece of discourse. Metafiction sets mutually contradictory "worlds" against each other. Authors enter texts and the characters appear to step into the "real" world of their authors. Words self-consciously displayed as words appear to get up and walk off the page to haunt the author and or argue with the reader. (101-02)

This specification positions Allen's vision and style within a modernist rather than a post-modernist paradigm. For even in *Deconstructing Harry* where reality and fiction are blended effortlessly, the moments of spectator disorientation are overcome and recontextualized; Harry is haunted and hunted by real people, not his characters, even when he is descending in his own personal hell. The distinction becomes clearer when Allen's picture is compared to films such as John McTiernan's *The Last Action Hero* (1993), Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* (1995), or Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), all of which are not so much an investigation into the life *versus* art dichotomy, but, rather, question the very basis of reality.[10] In that sense, in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, Baxter and Shepherd, both played by Jeff Daniels, are two clearly separate characters. In *The Last Action Hero*, however, Jack Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger) actually saves the actor "Arnold Schwarzenegger" in the movie, who plays himself — that is, he is his own extra-textual referent — but is at the same time a fictionalized version of the real Arnold Schwarzenegger. The border transgression between the different worlds receives an ironic treatement in the exchange when Jack tells "Arnold": "I don't really like you. You've brought me nothing but pain." Like Allen's films, *The Last Action Hero* is a highly intertextual film, a parodic metacommentary on the genre of the action movie. Towards the end, Ingmar Bergman, one of Allen's paragons is invoked. Yet, unlike *Love and Death*, which in spite of the comical reinterpretation of Tolstoy's epic, carries a subtext of modernist angst, in the domain of never-ending post-modern *bricolage* Bergman's Grim Reaper is vanquished effortlessly, yet definitively. Jack flatly tells the villain (Ian McKellen): "No sequel for you."

No discussion of the intertextual relations between Gogol and Allen would be adequate without at least a mentioning of the theme of the "little man." Consistently, both artists have been hailed as the champions of the anti-hero, the loser, the underdog. As far as Gogol is concerned, this view was promoted by Belinsky and since then has remained a dominant line in Gogol scholarship. In the chapter on the review of Allen scholarship, I identified a number of monographs on the Allen persona which take that particular perspective, usually contexualized within a Jewish cultural framework which foregrounds the *nebbish* and the *schlemiel.*[11] It is true that the examination of Gogol's and Allen's texts allows for such a conclusion. Regardless of whether we adopt this narrow, ethnic framework or take a more universalizing approach, the characters of Victor Shakapopolis (*What's New, Pussycat?*), Virgil Starkwell (*Take the Money and Run*), Fielding Mellish (*Bananas*), Allan Felix (*Play It Again, Sam*), Miles Monroe (*Sleeper*), Boris Grushenko (*Love and Death*), Danny Rose (*Broadway Danny Rose*), Cecilia (*The Purple Rose of Cairo*) all create a common semiotic space on whose centre stage the figures of Kleinman (*Shadows and Fog*) and Zelig (*Zelig*) capture the floodlights. And Gogol's gallery of "little men" (and women) which is inhabited by such unforgettable types as Akaky Akakievich ("The Overcoat"), Kovalyov ("The Nose"), Poprishchin ("Diary of a Madman"), Piskaryov ("Nevsky Prospekt"), and Pirogov ("Nevsky Prospekt"), Podkoliosin (*Marriage*) reaches its peak in his unfinished *poema*, *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*) where the characters — "masterpieces of comic creation" (Kent, "Introduction" xxxviii) — are reduced to a single trait wittily reflected in their names: Sobakevich (*sobaka* "dog") is a boor, Nozdrev (*nozdra* "nostril") is a show-off, Manilov (*manit'* "to lure") is a sycophant; Korobochka (literally, "a small box") is a stupid, narrow-minded hoarder; Pliushkin (*pliushka* "pancake") joins Balzac's Grandet and Dickens's Scrooge as one of world literature's great misers.

In his provocative monograph on Gogol, Karlinsky vehemently argues that "humanitarian concerns, philanthropic sympathy for the downtrodden, and concern for the 'little people'" (135) are dominant themes in Russian literature since the age of Sentimentalism so there was nothing left for Gogol "to pioneer" along these lines. The author has no pity for his characters; in fact, close readings of his most celebrated stories demonstrate a streak of cruelty towards them. Similarly, it is difficult unequivocally to accept the view that Allen's characters are nothing but pathetic losers in a godless universe devoid of sense or values. If we assume Canby's organic view of Allen's films as being "closely linked, related to each other, forming a continuum" ("Allen and Mia") in which the evolution of the Allen persona can be traced, it becomes even more difficult to succumb to the "little man" hypothesis.

Karlinsky refutes the claim that "The Overcoat" is "the first depiction of the 'insulted and injured' little man, the first realistic depiction of poverty and any number of other literary firsts" (135). Instead, he proposes a different reading of the text as "a love story, the most genuine, touching, and honest one in Gogol's entire *oeuvre*" (139). Taking "The Overcoat" as a starting point, he then methodically traces Gogol's hostile, dehumanizing attitude to women in all of his works. Working within a psychoanalytical framework, Karlinsky proves Gogol's homosexuality on the basis of his texts. Other scholars who adopt more traditional literary approaches also pay particular attention to the extreme negativism that the writer expresses towards his female characters. Moreover, sexuality in Gogol in general is either non-existent because he completely dehumanizes his female protagonists or if it is expressed, it bears the characteristics of an aberration with overtly incestuous overtones. In his comparative article Stenberg sees the same negative tendency expressed in "The Nose" where the depiction of women is seen as "decidedly one-dimensional" (112): they are either offensive or intimidating. The author of the article sees a similarity between Gogol's conception of his women with the portrayal of all the women except Cecilia in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (112). While I disagree with this interpretation, there are certain tangential points in the two artists' perception of women, especially if we take into consideration Allen's early films and especially his performances as a stand-up comic. In fact, one of the recurrent butts of his humour is his first wife Harlene Rosen who even filed a one million-dollar lawsuit against him for defamation.[12] In one of the routines, Allen refers to his first wife as "the notorious first Mrs. Allen" whose greatest sin is sexual unresponsiveness: "My first wife got a traffic ticket. Knowing her, it couldn't have been a moving violation" (qtd. in Baxter 57). Another joke deconstructs her *à la* Gogol into parts of her accessories: "The Museum of Natural History took her shoe and, based on her measurements, they reconstructed a dinosaur" (qtd. in Baxter 91). In Allen's short stories, women usually take the role of villains either because they are stifling and nagging, or because they cannot live up to the male protagonist's expectations. In Allen's films, the situation is by far not so one-dimensional. In the early ones, there is still a strong presence of what Lee calls Allen's "Playboy mentality" as a result of which the Allen alter ego often feels inferior and inadequate. Gradually, however, with the director's maturation, the situation gradually changes and Allen in fact has given some of the most remarkable female characters in American cinema. In that sense, Renata (Diane Keaton) from *Interiors*, Marion Post (Gena Rowlands) in *Another Woman*, Holly (Dianne Wiest) from *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Alice (Mia Farrow) from the film of the same title are eloquent testimony of Allen's own confession that his interest is dominated by the female psychology.

One of the accurate words that describe Gogol and Allen as individuals and artists is "elusive." In chapter 1, I already touched on the strategies that Allen implements to preserve the air of mystification around him; for Brode, "paradoxical" is the best definition of both his private person and public persona while Baxter practically calls him an impostor. Even the most superficial glance at Gogol's biography is sufficient to demonstrate the same forces in action in so far as the Russian (Ukrainian) writer is concerned. Thus, while Karlinsky claims that "illusion, deception, and mistaken identity" (280) are the basic themes in his writing, incidents from his life suggest that Gogol often did act as an impostor. It is well-known, for instance, that Gogol's extensive correspondence to his mother should be taken with reservation since often what he wrote to her had little to do with the truth. Another famous example illustrates well Gogol's personality. During his stay in St. Petersburg after the success of *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, he managed to use his newly acquired status as a writer in order to get an appointment as a professor of history at the University of St. Petersburg in spite of the fact that, as Kent diplomatically puts it, "his idea of the general subject was vague" ("Introduction" xxviii). Ivan Turgenev, who was one of his students gives the following testimony:

> We were all convinced ... that he knew nothing of history.... At the final examination ... he sat with a handkerchief wrapped around his head, feigning a toothache. There was an expression of extreme pain on his face, and he never opened his mouth.... I see ... Gogol's lean figure, with a long nose and the two ends of his black handkerchief surging above his head like two ears.
>
> (qtd. in Kent, "Introduction" xxviii)

Gogol's conduct evokes uncanny parallels with Allen's own detached behaviour in the process of casting actors for his films, as it is described by his biographers. He remains detached, silent, and inscrutable, often feigning extreme physical discomfort, a demeanour that on the evaluation scale ranges from "shy" to "arrogant," depending on the biographer's own biasses (see Lax, Fox, Baxter).

Even though the influence of Gogol's style is most obvious in Allen's early works, the spirit of Gogol permeates all of his creative endeavours. It can be found in Allen's stable paradigm of gastronomic poetics; his interest in magic and the bizarre; his constant strife to efface the clear boundaries between real and surreal, fact and fiction; in his explorations into the diverse facets of the "little man" which are often rendered through the ambivalent, at times confusing, at times chaotic *skaz*-like first-person narration; in the frenetic ludic moves Allen adopts to subvert generic conventions and established artistic models. The connection is captured by Baxter, whose discussion of Allen's very recent *Deconstructing Harry* places it not only in a Russian, but in a specifically Gogolian intertextual frame of reference:

> Allen will probably never make a more revealing film than *Deconstructing Harry*, the reworking of Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* which he shot in the winter of 1997 and released in Europe in early 1998. Relentlessly self-revelatory, cynical, spasmodic, it used comedy to achieve an effect close to the black farces of nineteenth-century Russia. If Gogol had applied his mind to the biopic, it might have looked very much like this. (434)

NOTES

[1] Since this was Allen's first film, which he scripted and acted in, but did not direct, he did not have any control over the final outcome. As a result, "the idea of having Victor as a sort of a minuscule, romantically less successful *alter ego* for Michael somehow got lost in the rewriting" (Fox 33). It was mainly producer Charles Feldman's fault who wanted to capitalize on the popularity of the two Peters: O'Toole and Sellers. For more details on how Sellers usurped the centre stage, see chapter 8 in Baxter's biography.

[2] As Kent makes it clear, it is questionable whether Dostoevsky really said the line since no scholar has been able to trace it in any of his writings (see "Introduction" xiv, note 1).

[3] In fact, both Lax and Fox quote critic John Mortimer who suggested that "the story could have been written by Gogol" (Lax, *Woody Allen* 278; Fox 199). Another formulation given by Philip French of *The Observer* was "Kafka meets Sophocles over the East River" (qtd. in Fox 199).

[4] Gogol himself used similar formulations to describe the world he created: "insignificant people," "a few freakish landowners," "the terrible staggering morass of trivia," etc., while S.T. Aksakov used the phrase "an assemblage of freaks" (see Gippius 127).

[5] It should not be forgotten, however, that Gil Shepherd is "also something of a fiction" (Fox 157). After all, his "real" name is distinctly Armenian — Herman Bardebedian. This detail further complicates the dominant theme of the double. Thus for critic Richard Roud, there is some doubt whether "Tom and Gil are really a double role at all, or, in true Pirandello terms, two separate extensions of a single personality" (qtd. in Fox 157).

[6] It should be made clear, however, that while Gogol projects a distinctly negative treatment of the theme of the prostitute, in part owing to his notorious misogyny, Allen's attitude is generally positive. The prostitute as a type appears

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in a number of his films as a bearer of humanist values that many of his "respectable" characters lack. In that sense, Allen is closer to Dostoevsky than to Gogol.

[7] For an extended discussion of Khlestakov's naïveté, see Mann, *Poe*[illegible] *Gogolia* 216-27.

[8] In fact, this is the reason why according to critics several of the short sketches comprising *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex* did not really work: the visual aspect was considered redundant. Canby, always kind to Allen, explains that "the picture's answers are contained entirely in parables, several of which attain heights of absurdity that are positively lyrical." Put differently, the Word once again reigns supreme. In the framework of Bakhtin's theory of carnival, it is worth mentioning that *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex* was one of the few Allen films to receive a "Restricted" rating. Allen's comment on the subject was succinct and to the point: "'R' for Rabelaisian" (qtd. in Fox 65).

[9] Eikhembaum formulates the theoretical postulates of *skaz* in 1918 his article "The Illusion of Skaz" ("Illiuzia skaza").

[10] See, however, King's dissertation *Idylls of Manhattan*. In it the author provides a close reading of *Hannah and Her Sisters* and defends the view that on a deeper level the film is a product of the post-modernist sensibility; it is seen "as a modern ironic allegory ... [that] presents questions about the existence of authority and then refuses to answer them. It makes fun of the possibility of a quest for meaning.... References are made to religion, mythology, philosophy, and to the soap opera-like simplistic vision of romance exhibited by the popular songs used in the film. Tensions exist between pre-textual material and the realism of its portrayal, between multiple meanings of images created by word play, and between figural and literal structures." (32)

[11] For a discussion of the differences between these two types, see Wernblad.

[12] According to Allen's biographers, Rosen and Allen settled out of court in mid-1967 and have not spoken since.

CHAPTER VI
Life and Death according to Allen and Tolstoy

> "Even today, Russians make me laugh, because they dress funny, because they are so square and, with their faces, they're so intense, brooding, concerned with serious subjects, and humourless"
>
> (Woody Allen, qtd. in Benayoun 157-58)

> "They were thrilled to be in a movie because their life was so boring ... just occupying Hungary."
>
> (Woody Allen on the use of Red Army soldiers for the battle scenes in *Love and Death*, qtd. in McCann, *Woody Allen: New Yorker* 198)

In his discussion of Herbert Ross's film *Play It Again, Sam*, based on Allen's play of the same name, and featuring him in the main role, Douglas Brode speculates on why Allen himself did not direct the screen version. According to Brode, Allen is extremely sensitive to questions of genre and medium and

> conceives of a project for a particular medium ... knowing that to transform a project uniquely suited to one medium into the very different conventions of another will always diminish the impact of the piece. As such, it becomes a commercial commodity rather than a work of art; a filmed play is not necessarily a film. (114)

The choice of Ross, as a director coming from a more conventional tradition, proves to be successful in the sense that "Ross makes this statement 'cinematic'" (114). The transposition of drama onto screen, however, results in a conceptual reinterpretation. On-stage, the play begins with Allan Felix watching John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and ends with his referring to Huston's *The African Queen* (1951). In Ross's version, these films are substituted by Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942). Thus, *Play It Again, Sam* "becomes a study of how one particular film ... ended having an unfathomable effect on the romantic views of our culture" (114). Aesthetically, Allen's play can be seen as his homage to Humphrey Bogart — rather than John Huston — while Ross's film is the director's tribute to Michael Curtiz (see Brode 114-22).

The brief discussion of the "mechanics" of one of Allen's plays turned into film is relevant for our understanding of his dialogue with other cultural texts. As Robert Benayoun stresses, "Woody has always maintained his love affair with the masterpieces of cinema and literature" (1986, 71). Calling him a "natural philosopher," the author claims that Allen "is the only comic of international renown who can be described as an intellectual" (71). This inherent philosophical dimension that can be detected in his succinct yet heavily charged *New Yorker* pieces appears early in his films, as well. *Love and Death* is Allen's first sustained attempt to tackle "death, decease, the end of things" (41) in the comic mode. The film is not only Allen's effort to interpret Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky following a Gogolian stylistics and an Eisensteinian awareness, but it is also the director's ambition to inscribe himself into the paradigm, be it by means of his "deliberate anachronistic Americanisms" (42) or simply by his mastery "to extract the laughter from his cerebral by-play" (71).

While critics in general acknowledge that *Love and Death* is Allen's homage to Russian culture, they do not provide a more in-depth discussion of the ways Allen appropriates it. In fact, most reviews and scholarly articles dealing with the film mention a few names of Russian writers, composers, and directors and then quickly move on either to examine the purely Allenesque nature of the film or to other influences. Thus, for Neil Sinyard,

> The main cinematic influence in *Love and Death* ... is Ingmar Bergman, the first time he has appeared as such a potent presence in a Woody Allen movie.... In *Love and Death*, the tortured self-analysis, the absence of God, the mystic visions, dreams and nightmares are all

> aspects of Bergman's influence and world, though here comically inflected. More specifically, a striking composition of two faces—Sonia and her cousin ... as they philosophise about life, borrows from Bergman's *Persona* (1966), just as the allegorical figure of death who plays with Woody's hero in *Love and Death* is a direct reference to Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957). (39)

Without disputing the above remarks, I would like to pay specific attention to the Russian layer in the film. Moreover, in spite of the kaleidoscopic incorporation of references, allusions, and implicit ideological disputes with numerous Russian texts, *Love and Death* is the beginning of Allen's explicit dialogue with Tolstoy, a dialogue which in varying degrees resurfaces again in such films as *Hannah and Her Sisters, Another Woman*, *Alice*, and *Everyone Says I Love You.* This claim becomes clearer if it is viewed in contrast to the underlying ideology of films such as *Crimes and Misdemeanors, Shadows and Fog,* and *Husbands and Wives*, all of which I consider primarily as Allen's response to Dostoevsky's texts.

In spite of the different spatio-temporal locales, Tolstoy and Allen share similar philosophical concerns that define their artistic production. E.B. Greenwood identifies some of these concerns in relation to Tolstoy: the nature of happiness, the difficulties in maintaining human relations, the essence of religion (2). There is no doubt that the same list applies to Allen. His awareness of his kinship with the Russian realist is reflected in undertaking the parodic reinterpretation of Tolstoy's epic novel and his public statements that for many years he considered it his best achievement (see Benayoun 157).[1] Brode, too, recognizes the merits of the film and considers it one of Allen's best, because it conveys "the duality of his nature" — "the expert popular entertainer ... and ... the closet intellectual-existentialist" — "through the tension in the work itself" (147).

What is often forgotten, however, is that Tolstoy himself provides the motivation for Allen's comic commentary. *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*) abounds in humour, wit, and acute observations: from superficial mockery of the impoverished yet idle Russian aristocracy to scathing indictment of the senselessness of war and its tragic implications. In *Love and Death*, Allen foregrounds the issues that concern him the most and in the network of visual and literary images interweaves a philosophical dimension.[2]

Using the numerous characters and plotlines of *War and Peace* as basis, Allen manages to conflate them into the biographical account of Boris Grushenko (Woody Allen), the son of a farmer (Zvee Scooler) in eighteenth century Russia "dredged up out of Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and the Lower East Side" (Bermel 409-10), and his "hot pursuit of the meaning of life...and his sultry cousin Sonja (Diane Keaton)" (video jacket). An inveterate coward, Boris does everything to avoid fighting against Napoleon's army but is forced to take part in the war. Purely by accident, he ends up a hero and, after many trials and tribulations, manages to marry Sonja. Sonja then convinces him to try to assassinate Napoleon (James Tolkan). The ploy proves to be somewhat problematic, in part due to the fact that there are two Napoleons — the "real" one and a stand-in who ends up getting killed. The relationship with Sonja turns out to be a difficult one and it ends prematurely when Boris is eventually caught and — duped by God — executed. The final sequence is Allen's visual rendition of Bergman's *danse macabre* in *The Seventh Seal* (1957).

According to Chances, *Love and Death* "takes on Russian and Soviet culture on a grand scale" ("Moscow Meets Manhattan" 67). Starting with the fact that the film was at least partially inspired after Allen had seen Sergei Bondarchuk's 1967 cinematic adaptation of Tolstoy's novel,[3] she then makes a list of the texts, names, characters, and symbols that Allen incorporates in his film. Sergei Prokofiev's music that can be heard throughout the film establishes a further intertextual link with Sergei Eisenstein, who used Prokofiev's scores in his own films, and who had already been "cited" by Allen in his earlier *Bananas* (see also Rosenblum and Karen 270; Fox, 81; Chances, "Moscow

Meets Manhattan" 76, n5). For Julian Fox, "the Act I 'Valse' from Tschaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty* adds an obligatory coating of sugar" (81).

Chances pays particular attention to Allen's frivolous use of onomastic literary references to invoke the Russian culture. Boris and Sonja, as well as Napoleon, are actual names that appear in *War and Peace*. Uncle Nikolai indirectly evokes the name of young Nikolai and a letter is taken to cousin Natasha in Kiev. Boris's last name Grushenko and allusions to Dmitri and Ivan recall "the tangled family relationships of *The Brothers Karamazov*" (Chances, "Moscow Meets Manhattan" 67), Sonja's declaration that she is "one-half saint and one-half whore" parodies *Crime and Punishment (Prestuplenie i nakazanie)*, and the character Myshkin refers us to *The Idiot (Idiot)*. The homage to Dostoevsky culminates in a witty exchange between Boris, waiting for his execution, and his father (Zvee Scooler) who visits him in prison. The entire sequence is composed of a textual pastiche of the titles of Dostoevsky's novels:

> Father: Remember that nice boy next door — Raskolnikov.
> Boris: Yeah.
> Father: He killed two ladies.
> Boris: No — what a nasty story.
> Father: Bobek told it to me. He heard it from one of the Karamazov brothers.
> Boris: Oh, he must have been possessed.
> Father: Well, he was a raw youth.
> Boris: Raw youth?! He was an idiot!
> Father: And he acted insulted and injured.
> Boris: I hear he was a gambler.
> Father: You know, he could be your double.
> Boris: How novel.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

Allen's choice of the names Tatiana and Trigorin expands the literary intertext to Pushkin and Chekhov, respectively. For Nancy Pogel, the beginning of the film when Boris through voice-over narration introduces his family echoes Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth (Detstvo, Iunoshestvo, Molodost')* (72), while Sonja's long speeches about wheat are a parody of *Anna Karenina* (75). Fox calls Countess Alexandrovna (Olga Georges-Picot) with whom Boris has a tryst "an Anna Karenina-like countess" (80), even though she is equally reminiscent of *War and Peace*'s amoral seductress Hélène Kuragina. Fox draws a further parallel with Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* in the series of idyllic sequences where Boris and Sonja experience the initial tensions of married life but eventually "find each other" (80).[4] Both Chances and Pogel identify some central images in the film directly linked to the literary sources: the opening sequence of the clouds, the scene at the opera, the aristocratic balls, the duel, the plan for Napoleon's assassination.

In addition, certain elements of the Gogolian absurdist poetics appear in the paradoxical situation of the father and son, Old Gregor and Young Gregor, where Young Gregor is older than Old Gregor, or the fact that a valuable piece of land owned by Boris's father turns out to be literally soil in his pocket. Another instance of Gogol's influence and his bitter sarcasm against the tsarist bureaucracy can be traced in the scene where Boris explains that he grew to "full manhood," that is 5'6". He then elaborates in the manner of Gogol's detached narrators that "if you are over 5'6", you can own property; over 5'3", you can own land; under 5'3", you need a special permission."

Compositionally, *Love and Death* is an extended flash-back. Through the technique of the confession, which "looks back to Allen's confessional persona in his nightclub years and forward to *Annie Hall* " (Pogel 72), Allen not only establishes a closer connection with his audience but also spoofs "Tolstoy's first-person narrations and Dostoevsky's intimate authorial voice" (72). For anyone familiar with *War and Peace*, the opening sequence with "the portentous clouds floating across the frame" (Pogel 72) is not so much an invocation of Bergman's opening in *The Seventh Seal* (Pogel 72), as a reference to the battle of Austerlitz where the wounded Andrei, gazing at the sky, senses its infinity and the comparative insignificance of human existence: "Above him there was nothing but the sky — the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with grey clouds gliding slowly across it" (*War and Peace* III: 13, 300). Boris's musings about his predicament that he is about to be executed for a crime that he never committed represent an ideological interpretation of the first of Andrei's spiritual revelations: "All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing, but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace" (III: 13, 300).[5] Andrei closes his inner monologue expressing his gratitude to God for having shown him illumination. Boris, on the other hand, questions the existence of God throughout his film and wants some kind of material proof for his existence: "a burning bush — something — Uncle Sasha picking up a cheque." In the end, an angel of God does appear to Boris promising him a last-minute reprieve, Dostoevsky style. It does not happen: Boris is cheated by God himself.

Essentially, "the film is a retrospective in which Boris tries to understand and to explain how he arrived at Death's doorstep" (Pogel 72). Brode stresses the permanent dimension of the film and suggests that its problematics transgress Boris's personal impasse and become a statement, albeit charged with comic relief, about the human condition:

> Death haunts the film. In Boris's opening voice-over, he tells us he's about to be executed for a crime he didn't commit, then takes his specific problem and makes it universal: "Isn't all mankind ultimately executed for a crime it never committed?" (154)

Thus, Allen tackles issues pertaining to life and death, love and sex, God and the meaning of existence, through an indirect dialogical exchange with the Russian nineteenth-century realists. While *Love and Death* lacks the encyclopedic breadth of Tolstoy's epic, Allen nevertheless manages to integrate many of the personages in *War and Peace* through his own "unique prism"

(Gilliat, qtd. in Brode 149).[6] Boris can be viewed as a composite character who combines several male protagonists in *War and Peace*. Boris Grushenko has the same first name as Boris Drubetskoy in the novel. The intertextual relationship between the two characters is most explicit in their interaction with their mothers. Drubetskoy's mother is a pragmatic woman with connections in high places who does her best to secure a stable officer's position for her son, possibly away from the battlefield. Grushenko's mother, on the other hand, as an ironic embodiment of Mother Russia, is eager to send her son off to war hoping that he would be killed. At the beginning of the narrative, Boris and his cousin Natasha are in love. Natasha is tempting and provocative, kissing him full on the lips, while Boris is reluctant to act on an impulse. He prefers to wait another four years and then properly ask for her hand (*War and Peace* I: 5, 45-46). In *Love and Death*, the roles are inverted: Boris is the persistent suitor while Sonja tries to cool his advances by means of a pseudo-existentialist philosophical discourse.

In some respects Boris resembles Nikolai Rostov, Natasha's brother. After all, in Tolstoy's novel, Nikolai is unofficially betrothed to his cousin Sonya since childhood. Unlike Nikolai, who is romantically drawn to the military way of life for the wrong reasons, however, Boris declares himself a pacifist and admits to Sonja that he had slept with the light on until the age of thirty. Yet, the theme that links Boris and Nikolai most strongly is the theme of cowardice. Boris does not hide this fact that he is a coward but it does not save him from being forced to join the army. Nikolai is impetuous and exalted at the beginning but in the course of the war, his glorified expectations of the conflict crumble as he experiences the realities of combat. In fact, when Nikolai faces death on the battlefield, his natural human reaction of fear and self-preservation, in which laughter and tears intermingle, is comparable to Allen's own persona. Nikolai's actions could easily have been executed by Boris himself:

> He looked at the approaching Frenchmen, and though but a moment before he had been galloping to get at them and hack them to pieces,

> their proximity now seemed so awful that he could not believe his eyes. "Who are they? Why are they running? Can they be coming at me? And why? To kill me? *Me* whom everyone is so fond of?" He remembered his mother's love for him, and his family's, and his friends', and the enemy's intention to kill him seemed impossible. "But perhaps they may do it!" ... He seized his pistol, and instead of firing it flung it at the Frenchman and ran with all his might towards the bushes.... with the feeling of a hare fleeing from the hounds. One single sentiment, that of fear for his young and happy life, possessed his whole being.... "No, there's some mistake," thought he. "They can't have wanted to kill me." (*War and Peace* II: 15, 200)

Ironically, in spite of their cowardice, both Nikolai in Tolstoy's novel and Boris in Allen's film become heroes — by pure chance. Nikolai is "welcomed by his home circle as the best of sons, a hero, and their darling Nikolenka, by his relations as a charming, attractive, and polite young man, by his acquaintances as a handsome lieutenant of hussars, a good dancer, and one of the best matches in the city" (IV: 2, 323-24). Boris's cowardly conduct earns him unexpected success. Left behind enemy lines after the elimination of his regiment, he hides in a cannon, faints, and then is inadvertently fired as a cannon-ball. Accidentally, he lands on a tent full of French generals who surrender immediately and make him a hero overnight.

In his philosophical tendencies, Boris is closest to Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, an idea already hinted in the opening sequence of the film. For Tolstoy, Andrei is the embodiment of the impulses of reason and spiritual yearning. In the course of the novel he undergoes a series of spiritual transformations which lead to his final acceptance of death (*War and Peace* III: 13, VI: I, X: 24, X: 38, XI: 25). Andrei dies resigned to his fate (*War and Peace* XII: 4). Tolstoy conveys his final encounter with Death with a verbal simplicity and cinematic precision that result in an almost tangible visualness:

> He was seized by an agonizing fear. And that fear was the fear of death. *It* stood behind the door. But just when he was clumsily creeping towards the door, that dreadful something on the other side was already pressing against it and forcing its way in. Something not human — death — was breaking in through that door and had to be kept out. He seized the door, making a final effort to hold it back — to lock it was no longer possible — but his efforts were weak and clumsy and the door, pushed from behind by that terror, opened and closed again.
>
> Once again *it* pushed from outside. His last superhuman efforts were vain and both halves of the door noiselessly opened. *It* entered, and it was *death*, and Prince Andrew died. (*War and Peace* XII: 4, 1084; emphasis in the original)

Conceptually, Allen creates Boris as a parody of the tormented Prince Bolkonsky. Andrei's solemn discourse is carnivalized into a hybrid of high philosophical issues alternating with low commonsense platitudes. To the statement of his fellow soldiers that through the war God is testing them, Boris fires back: "If he's going to test us, why doesn't he give us a written?" Moreover, Andrei's almost ascetic lifestyle is undermined by Boris's unceasing — though largely unfulfilled — sexual appetite. The constant interplay of metaphysical and physical finds adequate expression in Boris's series of questions to Uncle Nikolai (Florian): "What happens after we die? Is there a hell? Is there a God? All right, let me ask one key question: Are there girls?" Ultimately, Boris, too, dies. But unlike, Andrei, he is unable to find the answers to his existential quest and he reluctantly joins the Grim Reaper in his dance under the melody of "The Scythian Suite." In his final direct address to the audience he knows no more than at the beginning. Philosophy and the cerebral exercises he engages in throughout the film have not helped; he is left with a simpler, physical approach to the big questions: the meaning of life, God, death, and love. The human is made up of a mind and a body; the mind "embraces all the nobler aspirations of philosophy," yet it is the body "that has all the fun" — the moral is "not to be bitter."[7] If there is a god, "he is an underachiever." Death is not the end but an effective way of "cutting down on your expenses." As for love, it is "the quality that counts" although quantity should not be entirely forgotten. In other words, Boris chooses a more passionate, physical, approach to life.

In that sense, Boris is the epitome of Pierre Bezhukhov. In fact, Allen's original intention was to call the protagonist of *Love and Death* by that name (see Fox 78). Tolstoy already provides the textual motivation by means of his description of Pierre's outer appearance and awkwardness. At the very beginning of the novel, Tolstoy introduces Pierre as a "loser" worthy to be transformed into the Allen *nebbish* persona:

> Pierre was ungainly. Stout, above the average height, broad, with huge red hands; he did not know, as the saying is, how to enter a drawing-room and still less how to leave one; that is, how to say something particularly agreeable before going away. Besides this he was absent-minded. When he rose to go, he took up instead of his own, the general's three-cornered hat, held it, pulling at the plume, till the general asked him to restore it. (*War and Peace* I: 2, 22)

Tolstoy criticism usually identifies Pierre as Tolstoy's literary alter ego since his progress towards maturity in many respects resembles that of the writer. While in *War and Peace* one can find different aspects of Tolstoy reflected in different characters, the fact that it is Pierre who survives and achieves peace of mind in the end suggests that he is the truly central character of the novel and the spokesman for the author's ideological position.

In the course of the narrative, Pierre, too, undergoes a series of miraculous transformations: from a social outcast he becomes popular after the unexpected change in his material situation and hastily marries the beautiful but unscrupulous Hélène Kuragina (III: 1); he challenges Dolokhov to a duel in order to defend his wife's honour, accidentally wounds his rival, and is plagued by remorse (V: 5); he meets Bazdeev and is converted to a Freemason, yet he is unable to improve the economic situation of his serfs (V: 2, 9); he plans to assassinate Napoleon as the ultimate gesture of self-sacrifice, but is captured a prisoner-of-war on another charge (XI: 14, 16); he endures hardships and deprivation, but after the encounter with Platon Karataev he learns to accept his circumstances with serenity and fortitude and to be grateful simply for being alive (XIII: 3). Pierre finally marries Natasha who has also matured in the course of her personal experiences. Both of them end up succumbing to the routine of family life — the ultimate sources of happiness, according to Tolstoy (First Epilogue: 3, 4).

In *Love and Death*, Boris has a similar path in life. At the same time, every pivotal moment has a bathetic, rather than a pathetic, resolution — an artistic manifestation of Allen's darker twentieth-century vision. Following the rituals of military life, Boris mingles in aristocratic circles where he meets Countess Alexandrovna, recently widowed after her husband died in her arms "trying to satisfy her prodigious sexual desires." Her new lover, Count Anton Ivanovich Lebedkov (Harold Gould), introduces Boris as "the coward all St. Petersburg is talking about." Boris has a steamy love encounter with the Countess which lasts exactly five minutes but leaves her boudoir in shambles. The dialogue arranging the *rendez-vous* in fact has its textual basis in *War and Peace*, in the scene where Hélène tries to seduce Boris Drubetskoy:

> The greatest attention of all to Boris's narrative was shown by Hélène. She asked him several questions about his journey and seemed greatly interested in the state of the Prussian army. As soon as he had finished she turned to him with her usual smile.
>
> "You absolutely must come and see me," she said in a tone that implied that for certain considerations he could not know of this was absolutely necessary.

> "On Tuesday, between eight and nine. It will give me great pleasure."
>
> (*War and Peace* V: 5, 397)

In Allen's cinematic rendition, the humour, already introduced by Tolstoy's omniscient camera-eye, comes to the foreground:

> Countess Alexandrovna: My room at midnight?
> Boris: Perfect. Will you be there, too?
> Countess Alexandrovna: Naturally.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

As a result of his sexual prowess, Boris is challenged to a duel by Lebedkov and, just like Pierre, succeeds by sheer luck. Boris cheats Lebedkov by walking behind him, rather than away from him. Lebedkov shoots and wounds him; Boris shoots in the air but the bullet catches Lebedkov's arm. In an indirect parodic dialogue with Pierre, having learned "a great lesson," Lebedkov momentarily undergoes total regeneration:

> Lebedkov: From this day on, I will lead a new life, I will modify my views, I will preach goodness — perhaps join the Church. I will lead a righteous life, perhaps do as I did in my childhood: devote myself to my singing.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

The plan to assassinate Napoleon becomes a central subplot in *Love and Death*. The idea comes from Sonja, who, having finally married him prior to the duel to fulfill his death wish, needs some spice in her life. Their plan is riddled with obstacles. Eventually Boris is caught and executed, although he does make one last attempt to save himself through faith. He even has a vision of an Angel who promises to save him as proof that there *is* a God. It turns out to be a false reassurance: even if God does exist, he is either not omnipotent or undependable.

In spite of the layer of philosophical discourse present in the film, Boris in the end opts for a non-philosophical, sensualist approach to cope with the big issues. The lengthy, parodic, and often meaningless conversations between Sonja and Boris, textually grounded in the exchanges between Andrei and Pierre on the meaning of life (V: 9, 10; VI: 1; VIII: 21; X: 24), do not culminate in illumination; their only merit is that for a short time, they become a vehicle for Boris's carnal aspiration towards his cousin.

Just like Boris, Allen's Sonja is a composite character in whom different traits of various famous Russian heroines are condensed: Tolstoy's Natasha, Sonya, Hélène, Marie Bolkonska, Anna Karenina; Dostoevsky's Sonia (*Crime and Punishment*), Nastasya Filippovna (*The Idiot*), Grushenka (*The Brothers Karamazov*); Turgenev's Anna Odintseva (*Fathers and Sons*); Goncharov's Olga (*Oblomov*). At the same time, like Boris, Sonja possesses an anachronistic sensibility that positions her into the problematic of the late twentieth century, where ritual and rite become highly relativized and love relationships end in a *cul-de-sac*. In that sense, Boris's infatuation with Sonja is not only Allen's condensed version of the numerous amorous couples presented by Tolstoy — Boris and Natasha, Nikolai and Sonya, Boris and Julie Karagina, Nikolai and Marie Bolkonska, Natasha and Andrei, Natasha and Pierre;[8] it is also his interpretation of the First Epilogue of *War and Peace* and his scepticism regarding the enduring nature of love. Love is unfathomable, elusive, and incomprehensible, and more often than not transitory. This view finds its cinematic expression in the parodic scene where Sonja and Natasha are discussing the complexities of love:

> Natasha: It's a very complicated situation. I'm in love with Alexi. He loves Alicia. Alicia is having an affair with Lev. Lev loves Tatiana. Tatiana loves Simkin. Simkin loves me. I love Simkin but in a different way than Alexi. Alexi loves Tatiana like a sister. Tatiana's sister loves

> Trigorin like a brother. Trigorin's brother is having an affair with my sister, whom he likes physically but not spiritually.... The firm Myshkin and Myshkin is sleeping with the firm of Taskoff and Taskoff.
> Sonja: To love is to suffer. To avoid suffering one must not love, but then one suffers from not loving. To love is to suffer, not to love is to suffer.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

Sonja's pseudo-existentialist wrap-up of the issue expresses Allen's ambivalent view on love as something coveted but ungraspable. Without providing closure, the film is a bridge between his genre parodies and his autobiographical comedies, it maintains "a marvelous balance between the crowd-pleasing sight-gags of his former frolics and the serious social issues of his later philosophic works" (Brode 145). According to Lee,

> no amount of abstract intellectualizing will ever resolve the fundamental questions of human life, including: (1) Is it possible to create a deeply satisfying romantic relationship with just one person? (2) Is there one set of absolutely true moral principles, or is ethics simply a matter of opinion? (3) Is there a God? and (4) What will happen to me when I die? (46)

In other words, *Love and Death* continues Allen's search for an unambiguous answer as to in what consists happiness that he puts forward in *What's New, Pussycat?*, *Play It Again, Sam*, *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex**, *Sleeper* and culminates in his following film, *Annie Hall*. One possible solution is provided only a decade later with *Hannah and Her Sisters*, once again through the mediation of Lev Tolstoy.

In the context of the widely accepted understanding of Allen's cinematic texts, *Hannah and Her Sisters* is an unusual film. Contrary to the open-ended, unresolved quests of the characters in films such as *Annie Hall*, *Manhattan*, or

Interiors, *Hannah and Her Sisters* offers some kind of closure: it provides a solution to the big issue of human happiness. Lee points out that, "By beginning and ending the film at family gatherings by using a large ensemble cast, Allen emphasizes that this is a family saga rather than the story of an individual" (190). Although the recurrent theme of the three sisters immediately invites parallels both with *Interiors* and with Chekhov, the underlying ideological layer subtly points towards Tolstoy.[9] In fact, the Russian writer is directly referred to in one of the film's headings which from a narratological point of view divides it into chapters: "The only absolute knowledge attained by man is that life is meaningless." What is curious is that while the other literary quotation — "...nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands," from a poem by e.e. cummings — is actually articulated by Lee (Barbara Hershey) through the technique of voice-over, Tolstoy's global statement is not directly spoken by any character; it remains suspended and encompasses the entire film.

From the point of view of its structure, *Hannah and Her Sisters* transgresses the fragmentary nature of Allen's earlier films. As Canby points out in his review, the film has "the narrative score of a novel" ("Urban Romantics").[10] It consists of sixteen episodes held together by three Thanksgiving dinners. In spite of its existential dimension, introduced by Mickey Sachs (Woody Allen) in his search for the meaning of life in a godless universe, the film pulsates with life and continuity. It opens with a feast and ends with a feast, with another one in the middle to reinforce the notion of cyclicity and the physicality of life. In that sense, Allen functionalizes the inspiration from Tolstoy with respect to the film's composition (see McCann 235). The first scene, beginning *in medias res* and depicting Elliott (Michael Caine) lusting after his sister-in-law, Lee, gives a cinematic rendition to Tolstoy's celebrated opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (I: 1, 1)

I would argue, however, that while on the formal level, the primary text Allen has in mind may be *Anna Karenina* — with regards to the two parallel plot-lines that unfold simultaneously, the actual source for the quotation he incorporates, and the spoof on Levin's relentless search for the meaning of life — on an ideological level, he in fact continues to explore the physical-metaphysical dichotomy of Pierre-Andrei in *War and Peace*. In that sense, Mickey can be seen as a mature and more sombre Boris, who in his relatively safe environment is equally unable to find a solution to his philosophical and moral dilemmas.

In his novel, Tolstoy maintains his omniscient control as narrator and although he makes his two male protagonists face different kinds of predicaments, in the end he provides an unequivocal answer: one should forget the artificiality and hollowness of society, return to the roots of nature, and immerse oneself in its beauty. Philosophy and hyper-rationalization can neither bring happiness nor offer solutions. Simple family life can be the only subterfuge to overcome the terrifying abyss of death and give meaning to our existence. At the end of *Anna Karenina*, Levin finally finds satisfaction in family and work on his country estate, but, ultimately, many of his questions remain unanswered. For Allen, however, Rousseau's maxim of "Back to nature" can only be a source of derision. Even if nature is not directly attacked in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, it is still gently poked fun at. During Elliott's seduction of Lee, he enumerates some of the reasons why his marriage to Hannah (Mia Farrow) is falling apart. Since he is an incarnation of the traditional Allen persona of the indecisive, confused, urban male, it is not surprising that one of the problems Elliott has to face is Hannah's desire to go live in Connecticut, that is the countryside. Thus, on an authorial level Allen subtly argues with Tolstoy that nature is no longer the answer.

In *Love and Death*, many of Boris's ethical dilemmas are prompted by the state of war and its senseless massacre of innocent lives. Just like Tolstoy, Allen assumes an objectively detached position while narrating the loss of life: the battle is seen as "business as usual" including the food vendors; when of twelve thousand soldiers only fourteen remain alive, Allen cannot contain his sarcasm reflected in the succinct message from the tsar: "Keep up the good work." The situation is different as far as Mickey is concerned. There is no war, he lives in New York — his city — and, to top it all, he is a successful television producer. In spite of it all, Mickey is not happy. Consistent with his earlier transmutations, he is a hypocondriac and a sceptic. He is Elliott's double, an idea that Mickey himself realizes. During one of his encounters with Hannah he explains that he likes Elliott because he is "a loser," "awkward and clumsy," just like her new husband. Yet, Elliott remains an indecisive sensualist who wants to fully experience the passions of life but is too afraid to risk his well-structured, domesticated life.[11] He is erudite and enjoys literature and music, but his interests ultimately remain purely aesthetic. He dares not venture into the ethical dimension.

Mickey, like Boris, Andrei, Pierre, and Levin, needs answers. As such, he transgresses into the domain of ethics and faith. Early in *Love and Death*, Boris talks about his strange dream after the funeral of Nehamken (Georges Adet) in which he has a vision of waiters dancing from a coffin. Boris sums up: "I knew that after that dream I would not grow up to be an ordinary man." Usually, Boris's dream is viewed solely as a parody of Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, who also tries to justify his superior nature by means of a dream (*Crime and Punishment* I: IV). However, to some extent Boris's dream is more related to Pierre's dream leading eventually to his decision to kill Napoleon. Unlike Raskolnikov's delirious semi-conscious state, Pierre's quest is directly oriented towards the issues that concern Boris/Allen: God, death, existence.

> "To endure war is the most difficult subordination of man's freedom to the law of God," the voice had said. "Simplicity is submission to the will of God, you cannot escape from Him.... Man can be master of nothing while he fears death, but he who does not fear it possesses all. If there were no suffering man would not know his limitations, would not know himself. The hardest thing" (Pierre went on thinking, or hearing, in his dream) "is to be able in your soul to unite the meaning of

> all. To unite all?" He asked himself. "No, not to unite. Thoughts cannot be united, but to *harness* all these thoughts together is what we need!"
> (*War and Peace* XI: 6, 933; emphasis in the original)

Boris's attempt to unite the meaning of all into a comprehensible totality and his inability to do it find a non-realistic, middle-of-the-road resolution that in the end highlights the laughter rather than the tears: Boris does end up in jail, but fortunately, "it was a French jail so the food was not bad." He does find God, but God is neither able to save him, nor to help him vanquish his doubts — on the contrary; finally, he does die, but the last shot of him is of a happy, life-affirming, full-blooded dance worthy of a Tolstoy character. This ideological compromise is captured by Yacowar in his wrap-up of the film:

> ...*Love and Death* ends as it began — with a view of the beautiful, clouded, but empty heavens and with an assertion of joy. The first character that we see in the film is Uncle Nikolai with his famous laugh ("God, he was repulsive," adds the unsentimental young Boris.) The last we see is Boris dancing with Death along a placid lake. Boris entered the film with a pratfall *kazatsky*; he leaves in an elegant, graceful *pas de deux* (of sorts). As he tiptoes around the thin, majestic trees, he seems to have found with Death a grace of which he was deprived in life. Moreover, in the Hassidic flavor of his dance, Boris is telling us that in the face of our mortality we can do nothing better than snap our fingers, dance, laugh, and be hearty, our senses enlivened by art and our appetites sharpened for life. The opening laugh and closing dance provide a frame of hearty joy that dispels the futile philosophizing, politics, and religious tension in the body of the film. Death may take Boris away, but Allen has snatched from its jaws an affirmation of appetite, of life in laughter, and the immortal continuity of the human

> spirit, at least through its art. The beauty of the last shot ... bear[s] mute testimony to the peace and delight potentially available to man if only...
>
> (*Loser Takes All* 169)

In a paradoxically Allenesque fashion, Boris recaptures his *joie de vivre* through death. He does not settle down to a fulfilled, mediocre existence with Sonja *à la* Pierre and Natasha or Levin and Kitty. Instead, in the final shots he sustains a moral, if not a physical, victory over mortality by refusing to accept the inevitable.

Mickey, too, constantly experiences a series of dreams. His dreams, however, are less metaphysical in nature. Rather, they focus on the issue of physical decay and human mutability: he imagines that he is dying from a brain tumour, he reminisces about his failed marriage, he is on the verge of committing suicide in a state of dejected reverie. Mickey can be considered a kind of a twentieth-century composite American version of both Levin and Vronsky. This idea is supported by the fact that Mickey's personal crisis consists of episodes that in *Anna Karenina* relate to these two celebrated fictional characters.

Unlike Levin's sombre realization that sooner or later death is inevitable, Mickey's obsession with his mortality and the transitory nature of life is more comical in nature, in part due to the Judaic religious framework and in part due to the fact that he only thinks he has a brain tumour. Levin's thoughts about "the abyss," on the other hand, are triggered off by the progressive illness of his brother:

> His brother got into bed, and whether he slept or did not sleep, he tossed about like a sick man, coughed, and, when he could not get his head clear, mumbled something.... Levin could not sleep for a long while, hearing him. His thoughts were all sorts of things, but the end of all his thoughts was the same — death. Death, the inevitable end of all,

> for the first time presented itself to him with irresistible force. (*Anna Karenina* III: 31, 368)

On some level, however, even if the terminal illness is imagined, in his mind, it is still very real for Mickey. For once the test results are not immediately reassuring and he is required to go for additional, more sophisticated audiometry tests. Mickey's anxiety foregrounds the theme of the relativity of happiness and the non-existence of absolutes in the scene in Mickey's office where he is discussing the issue with Gail (Julie Kavner):

> Mickey: This morning I was so happy, you know. Now I don't know what went wrong.
> Gail: You were miserable this morning. We got bad reviews, terrible ratings, the sponsors are furious.
> Mickey: No, I was happy, but I just didn't realize I was happy.
> (transcript from the videofilm)

Both Levin and Mickey have an identical reaction once they come to the realization that it is a no-win situation: sooner or later, *it* will have the upper hand, even if Andrei Bolkonsky accepts it happily in the end and Nat Ackerman in "Death Knocks" manages to stave it off for a little while by winning at gin rummy:

> And death ... was not so remote as it had hitherto seemed to him. It was in himself too; he felt that. If not today, tomorrow; if not tomorrow, in thirty years, wasn't it all the same! (*Anna Karenina* III: 31, 368)

> Mickey (to Gail): Can you understand how meaningless everything is? Everything, er — our lives, the show, the whole world — it's

> meaningless? ... Even if I'm fine now, eventually I'll be in that position.
>
> (transcript from videofilm)

Tolstoy's hatred of his impotence to stop decay, to master the inexorable force of aging is well-known (see, e.g., Steiner). One of his big themes that emerges in his entire *oeuvre* is the theme of death and its relation to the meaning of life succinctly expressed in his *A Confession*:

> Today or tomorrow sickness and death will come ... to those I love or me; nothing will remain but stench and worms. Sooner or later my affairs whatever they may be, will be forgotten, and shall not exist. Then why go on making any effort? (19-20)

His story "The Death of Ivan Ilych" ("Smert' Ivana Ilyicha") is a minutely detailed account — using a blend of stark realism and the *fantastique* — of the consequences of the recurrent visits of the spectre of death on the human psyche.[12] In his article "Tolstoy, Death, and the Meaning of Life," Roy Perrett identifies four possible responses that Tolstoy has to his despair arising from the absurdity of life (232): the ignorant position, that is, not understanding that life is absurd; the epicurean position, or, living life to the fullest while it lasts; the strong position, manifested in suicide as the "worthiest way of escape" (*A Confession* 41); the weakling position, which Tolstoy himself adopts: "seeing the truth of the situation and yet clinging to life, knowing in advance that nothing can come of it" (*A Confession* 41). Each of these vantage points finds its novelistic representation in Tolstoy's works. Moreover, often Tolstoy the artist-realist is far more successful in convincing the audience of the complex issues pertaining to the essence of life than Tolstoy the thinker-prophet who tries to propagate the metaphysical notions that engage his mind. In other words, Tolstoy succeeds in being a moralist via the mediation of aesthetics.

To illustrate the view, it is worth contemplating briefly the theme of suicide in *Anna Karenina*. In general, suicide is most closely connected with the characters of Levin, Vronsky, and Anna. The author subtly develops the theme following a gradation that builds up the tension. Levin undergoes a series of existential crises exacerbated by his tangible encounters with physical decay through the slow death of his brother; however, he never actually acts on his impulses of desperation. Vronsky makes an unsuccessful attempt to shoot himself after a pivotal meeting with Karenin, where the latter forgives both him and his adulterous wife; as a result, he "felt disgraced, humiliated, guilty, and deprived of all possibility of washing away his humiliation" (IV: 18). His gesture to end it all comes as the realization that his life as a member of society is finished, the only way to escape humiliation is to shoot himself, so he does. The scene is as emotional as it is parodic. Depending on what view one takes, Vronsky's bungled suicide is either a result of Tolstoy's awareness of human nature and his intention to show us that at the moment of crucial choice we are all cowards, or a result of his moral condemnation of Vronsky's deeds, a position that prompts his judgemental omniscient narrator to deny Vronsky an honorable death. Either way, Vronsky does not die. The scene is a powerful one, nonetheless, and its atmosphere and final outcome are used by Allen in *Hannah and Her Sisters* in the section "Lucky I ran into you."

> He went to the door and closed it; then, with staring eyes and clenched teeth, he went to the table, took a revolver, looked around him, turned it to a loaded chamber, and sank into thought....
>
> "Of course," he said to himself, as though a logical, continuous, and clear chain of reasoning had brought him to an indubitable conclusion. In reality this "of course" that seemed convincing to him was simply the result of exactly the same circle of memories and images through which he had passed ten times already during the last hour — memories of happiness lost forever. There was the same conception of

> the senselessness of everything to come in life, the same consciousness in humiliation.....
>
> "Of course," he repeated, when for the third time his thought passed again around the same spellbound circle of memories and images, and pulling the revolver to the left side of his chest, clutching it vigorously with his whole hand, as though clenching a fist, he pulled the trigger. He did not hear the sound of the shot, but a violent blow on his chest sent him reeling. He tried to clutch the edge of the table, dropped the revolver, staggered, and sat down on the floor, looking about him in astonishment.... He made an effort at thought, and was aware that he was on the floor; and seeing blood on the tigerskin rug and on his arm, he knew he had shot himself.
>
> "Idiotic! Missed!" he said fumbling for the revolver....
>
> The elegant, whiskered servant, who used to continually complain to his acquaintances of the delicacy of his nerves, was so panic-stricken on seeing his master lying on the floor that he left him to bleed to death while he ran for assistance. (*Anna Karenina* IV: 18, 439)

Of the three, it is only Anna that actually follows through. In fact, her death is one of the most celebrated fictional tragic events in world literature (VII: 31). Anna dies neither as a victim of nineteenth-century Russian society nor of Tolstoy's antipathy. As Leonard Kent and Nina Berberova point out, she dies a victim of her own narrow-minded conventionality:

> Anna is destroyed because it is beyond her to surmount the consequences of her liaison with Vronsky, because it is impossible for her to rationalize away the guilt that suffocates her. Because her standards are society's, because the morality of Victorian Russia is her morality, she condemns herself, surrenders, disintegrates, dies. Her vivacity and beauty attracted even the eyes of her creator, but she wearies him by doing what he determines she should do, but what

> Tolstoyan morality could never tolerate in a woman: she is unfaithful, smokes, rides, plays tennis, takes opium, practices birth control, discusses Doré, and reads Taine. Bored by her, then irritated, then alarmed, then hostile, he gives her his heart once more just before her death, and he offers her the light she sees just before the final blackness.
> ("Introduction" xix)

With *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Woody Allen in a way gives his response to Tolstoy's ethical and existential dilemmas, using the writer's formal structures to achieve a more organic effect. He incorporates the ideological dimension of *Anna Karenina* into his own original artistic text. In that sense, while Hannah, Holly (Dianne Wiest), and Lee should be viewed in the context of Chekhov's three sisters — Olga, Masha, and Irina — as well as the Renata (Diane Keaton), Joey (Marybeth Hurt), Flyn (Kristen Griffith) trio from *Interiors*, another correspondence also comes to mind in relation to *Anna Karenina*. Allen embodies in his three contemporary heroines the same traits that define the female protagonists in Tolstoy's novel. Thus, there is a strong kinship in the characters of Hannah and Dolly Oblonskaya. Both women are devoted to their families yet suffer from weak-willed, philandering husbands whom they forgive in the end. Lee can be viewed as a modern Kitty Scherbatskaya, a kind of a superficial, playful woman who enjoys being the centre of attention even at the expense of the suffering of others. Both Kitty and Lee undergo a long process of discovering deeper values in life in union with their partner. After Vronsky's rejection Kitty goes to Germany to recover her health, later accepts Levin's second marriage proposal, and after an extended period of readjustment and maturation finds true happiness and contentment with her husband. Lee first has to break free from her long-time lover and mentor, Frederick (Max von Sydow) — another instance of many Pygmalion-Galatea relationships in Allen's creative production[13] — then experience her disappointment with Elliott, caused by his inability to leave Hannah and commit totally to her, until in the end she breaks free from both relationships, establishes her independence by enrolling at Columbia University, and finally — judging by the final Thanksgiving sequence — finds a soul-mate in a university professor. Holly in many respects resembles Anna: she is warm, charming, and vital, even though she does not attain the status of a tragic heroine. Of the three sisters, she is the daring one: she is the one who chainsmokes, who has had a cocaine problem, who likes to live in the fast lane of life. In the context of late twentieth-century sensibility, she does have a tragic personal life: as a middle sister, she compares poorly to Hannah and cannot compete with Lee, she has a history of financial troubles (taken care of by Hannah), she loses her love interest, David (Sam Waterston), to her best friend, April (Carrie Fisher), and she has no professional success as an actress. Unlike Anna, however, Holly does not give in to social convention. After a string of unsuccessful ventures, she manages to become a fulfilled, successful writer and through her art she resolves her personal conflicts: with sisters, parents, friends.

It is a known fact that Allen did not intend the happy ending he ultimately provide for *Hannah and Her Sisters*. Originally, the intent was to leave Elliott forever infatuated with Lee and to avoid the miraculous resolution regarding Mickey's infertility. However, the filmic text with its happy ending exists as an autonomous and authoritative artefact. As such, it is Allen's perhaps reluctant response as to what is the essence of existence. According to the film, the answer is quite straightforward, expressed in Mickey's cathartic realization in the process of watching the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*:

> Mickey (to Holly): I started to feel — how can you even think of killing yourself? I mean, isn't it so stupid? I mean, look at all the people up there on the screen. You know, they're real funny. And, I mean, what if the worst *is* true? What if there *is* no God and you only go around once and that's it? Well, you know, don't you want to be part of the experience? What the hell — it's not *all* a drag and I'm thinking to myself, geez, I should stop ruining my life searching for answers I'm

> never gonna get, and just enjoy it while it lasts. And you know, after, who knows? Maybe there *is* something. Nobody really knows. I know "maybe" is a very slim reed to hang your whole life on — but that's the best we have. And then I started to sit back and I actually began to enjoy myself.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

Thus, in a way Allen comes to the same, "weak" resolution of the big issue: the meaning of life. In spite of the uncertainty, this life is all we have got — let's enjoy it to the fullest. Following this logic, the *deus ex machina* ending of *Hannah and Her Sisters* no longer seems so contrived.

NOTES

[1] McCann claims that Allen was actually disappointed with the audience's "joyful reaction" to the film and quotes him as saying: "People don't connect with the seriousness of that picture because of the [comic] tone" (*Woody Allen: New Yorker* 76).

[2] Neil Sinyard points out that *Love and Death* appeared approximately at the same time as Mel Brooks's adaptation of *The Twelve Chairs* (1970). He concedes that there are "definite similarities; an unexpected visual expansiveness inspired by Eastern European locations; heroes betrayed by fate; and a cynical rather than purely comic debate about the absence of divine justice" (41). At the same time, he sees certain crucial differences: "the Brooks film has no real equivalent to the intense romanticism of *Love and Death* nor its wide-ranging artistic allusions" (41).

[3] Chances cites an interview with Allen in *Sunday News* where he admits: "I saw Sergei Bondarchuk's eight-hour version of *War and Peace* and I thought it

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would be a good atmosphere to fool around with" ("Moscow Meets Manhattan" 77, n4).

[4] Contrary to Fox, I do not agree with such an optimistic reading of the final outcome. As in the majority of his films, especially the early ones, Allen does not provide a happy resolution to issues pertaining to either love or death.

[5] The motif resurfaces in *September* where Lane (Mia Farrow) has to deal with her guilt over a killing she never committed. The theme, of course, culminates in an ironic reversal in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Judah (Martin Landau), who *has* committed a crime not only quickly forgets about it, but even attains a greater peace of mind, public recognition, and material prosperity.

[6] In passing, it is worth mentioning that while Allen's film may not belong to the genre even of the mock-epic, the process of making the film is a different story. Filmed in France, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, the shooting schedule was plagued by disasters and a chain of misadventures (see Fox 75-81). Fox quotes Allen's own humorous testimony of his experiences: "When good weather was needed, it rained. When rain was needed, it was sunny. The cameraman was Belgian, his crew French. The underlings were Hungarian, the extras were Russian. I speak only English — and not really that well. Each shot was chaos. By the time my directions were translated, what should have been a battle scene ended up as a dance marathon. In scenes where Keaton and I were supposed to stroll as lovers, Budapest suffered its worst weather in twenty-five years" (76). Other incidents involved an actor breaking his leg, an actress falling off a horse and breaking her nose, a defective lens, an outbreak of the flu, food poisoning suffered by Charles Joffe, Allen's spraining his back by falling on ice in front of the Eiffel Tower and later suffering second-degree burns, Keaton's eye injury due to a violin bow stuck in it by Allen, problems with developing the film negatives, an undependable Hungarian crew, misunderstandings caused by translations that at times had to go through four languages.

[7] It was mentioned earlier that the NBC sitcom *Seinfeld* is in many respects indebted to Allen's vision of life. That is why it is not surprising that Allen's

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dualistic understanding of human beings is literally visualized in an episode where Jerry is seen playing chess. The two participants in the match are his brain and his penis.

[8] Here one should not forget that Tolstoy himself was married to a Sonya (Sofya). The marriage itself has become the object of scholarly investigation since it underlies numerous marital relationships in Tolstoy's novels. For about two decades the relationship was extremely successful, until it began to deteriorate in part due to "the tragedy of boredom" (Tolstoy, qtd. in Kent and Berberova xv) and much more due to Tolstoy's religious crisis (see, e.g., Polnder, Asquith, Edwards, Smoluchowski, Shirer).

[9] Canby, for instance, claims: "In this new film ... Mr. Allen remains as obsessed as he's ever been with love, sex, death, God and the meaning of life. However, the tone now is more mellow and more benign.... It's as if Mr. Allen has liberated Renata, Flyn and Joey, the three sisters of *Interiors*, to allow them to become their own women in this new work" ("Woody Allen Tops Himself")

[10] In an extended review about the film, Canby elaborates on this aspect by comparing the film to other Allen works: "If *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan* might be called novellas, then *Hannah and Her Sisters* looks to be Mr. Allen's first completely successful, full-length novel. It's as free in form as *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*, but it also possesses a narrative vision broad enough to accommodate eight fully realized characters, no one of whom is more or less important than another, and each of whom has a distinctive voice." The freedom in time, place and point of view (cinematic freedom) make Allen's film "seem quite as literary as it is cinematic" since it "demonstrates literary techniques and devices as often as it drops names." The film does not "hesitate to enter the mind and thoughts of particular characters as the need arises. It somehow manages to keep eight people in focus simultaneously. Though the story progresses chronologically, there are also extended flashbacks as well as ellipses that hurl the narrative forward while sustaining the essential mystery ... that is the basis of all fiction..." ("Woody Allen Tops Himself").

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[11] According to Lee, the casting of Caine in the role was a successful choice because it inevitably evokes the "cinematic baggage" the actor carries in the course of his appearance in similar roles from *Alfie* (1966) to *Blame It on Rio* (1983): he becomes the embodiment of "the middle-class adolescent, disillusioned with material success, who seeks to fulfill himself through illicit passion" (188).

[12] On the linguistic and literary devices Tolstoy choses to create his psychologically insightful vision of death, see Parthé.

[13] In his book *Woody Allen's Angst*, Sander Lee consistently traces the Pygmalion-Galatea theme in Allen's cinematic *oeuvre*. He defines the theme as depicting a couple in which an older man is the teacher, mentor, and lover/husband of a young, inexperienced woman who, however, has potential for intellectual growth. Eventually the woman breaks free. Some of these Allen couples are: Linda (Diane Keaton)-Allan Felix (Woody Allen) in *Play It Again, Sam*; Luna (Diane Keaton)-Miles (Woody Allen) in *Sleeper*, Annie (Diane Keaton)-Alvy (Woody Allen) in *Annie Hall*; Tracy (Mariel Hemingway)-Isaac (Woody Allen) in *Manhattan*; Dorrie (Charlotte Rampling)-Sandy (Woody Allen) in *Stardust Memories*; Ariel (Mia Farrow)-Leopold in *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*; Rain (Juliette Lewis)-Gabe (Woody Allen) in *Husbands and Wives*; Amanda (Helena Bonham Carter)-Lenny (Woody Allen) in *Mighty Aphrodite*. It should be pointed out that there are some occasions when the relationship is inverted. In *Interiors* Eve (Geraldine Page) is a female Pygmalion to her husband (E.G. Marshall): in a sense, "*Interiors* replays the anhedonia and Pygmalion themes of *Annie Hall*, albeit with a female Alvy" (Lee 75). There is a similar situation in *The Purple Rose of Cairo* where Cecilia (Mia Farrow) and Tom (Jeff Daniels) reverse the usual Pygmalion relation between the male teacher and the female student. In the film, Cecilia educates the fictionally romantic Tom Baxter in the ways of the real world (see also Lee 180).

CHAPTER VII

Allen's Vision of Chekhov's Poetics

> Apparently settled during the late 1960s and early 1970s as a sort of hip, urban neurotic successor to Chaplin, Keaton and the Marx Brothers — as well as a master parodist of everything from science fiction to Russian literature, Italian movies to Third World politics — he then assumed the role in the following decade of a middle-class, New York Jewish Chekhov, dealing with the moral and sexual complexities of intellectual overachievers like himself.
>
> (Fox on Woody Allen 11)

In Chapter III, it was pointed out that while metatextual relations can be categorized under the general heading of intertextuality, they possess a more archetypal quality due to the fact that they establish a more open dialogue between texts. This openness extends both to thematic universality and spatio-temporal transpositions. The chronotopic parameter is of particular significance when the two texts in question belong to different artistic media, such as literature and film. In his *A Poetics of Composition,* Boris Uspensky observes that "if pictorial art presupposes some spatial concreteness in its transmission of the represented world but allows temporal indefiniteness, then literature ... insists as a rule on some temporal concreteness, and permits spatial representation to remain completely undefined" (76). For Uspensky, the rendition of spatial forms and relations in a verbal medium is achieved by their translation into a temporal sequence (77). Following this premise, one can define the process of transference from verbal into visual as a process of transference of time into space. In other words, while "translating" verbal into visual, we establish a set of purely technical relations between the text, as the final product of the verbal art, and the picture, as the final product of the visual art.

In screening a play, the director is faced with two alternatives for the rendition of space. On the one hand, he or she may adhere to the theatrical approach by faithfully staging dramatist's remarks without further additions or modifications while adapting them to the broader cinematic potentialities. In this case the result is a filmed theatrical performance or a period piece. On the other hand, the director may decide to "read" the play as a whole and extract elements from the overall text which eventually lead him or her to his or her own construction of an original spatial organization. This final setting may be partially or entirely different from the spatial forms preset by the playwright.

This assumption is necessary in order to understand the nature of Allen's intertextual dialogue with Chekhov which is multilateral and complex. *Annie Hall, Interiors, Manhattan, A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy, Hannah and Her Sisters, September* have all been defined as "Chekhovian" in spirit due to their thematics and stylistics. According to Stenberg,

> *Annie Hall, Manhattan*, and *Hannah and Her Sisters* remind one of Chekhov's plots and characters. Indeed, Vincent Canby has referred to Allen's *September* as "neo-Chekhovian." And just as Chekhov created plots around the lives of educated people, Allen has preferred complicated situations among New York intellectuals. (109)

In her overall negative evaluation of *Interiors* in comparison with *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Wernblad also emphasizes Allen's appropriation of Chekhov's (and Bergman's) poetics in his own artistic universe:

> The theme of the three sisters is of course well-known from Chekhov's play as well as from Ingmar Bergman's film *Cries and Whispers*. Allen was clearly influenced by both works when he made *Interiors*, but *Interiors* seemed derivative and heavy-handed precisely because it was made more in the spirit of these classics than in the spirit of Allen himself. Because *Hannah and Her Sisters* is concerned with the typical

> Allenesque themes, and told with the typical Allenesque complexity, it succeeds where the previous family portrait failed.
>
> (113)

The major reservations expressed by scholars towards *Interiors*, therefore, have to do with the fact that Allen intentionally abandoned his own poetics for the Chekhovian. This trend of interpretation in Allen scholarship is criticized by McCann in his book, *Woody Allen: New Yorker*. The author expresses his dissatisfaction with critics whose "aversion to [Allen's] *auteurism*" (172) leads them to an obsessive pigeon-holing of his artistic experiments:

> They manage to explain his "deviations" on *their* terms, by labelling his "non-Woody" work as "Bergmanesque," "Felliniesque," or "Chekhovian." When *September* was reviewed, the common approach was to deny that the work was a "real" Allen movie: "If this sounds like a Chekhov play you have a point" (*New York Daily News*); "The play is Chekhovian" (*New York Times*); "Neo-Chekhovian" snaps Vincent Canby; "True to Chekhov" (*Downtown*); "A Chekhovian house party" (*NewYork*); "Chekhovian seriousness" (*Guardian*); "No Woody Allen, no laughs, and a whole load of Chekhovian pining" (*The Sunday Times*); "this time, he's giving us a version of Chekhov" (*The Listener*); and Marcelle Clements, chewing her pencil and daring to be different, if totally incomprehensible, with "para-Chekhovian" (*Premiere*). (172-73)

This Allenesque "deviation" is even more apparent when *Interiors*, for example, is compared with *Hannah and Her Sisters*. In his attempt to redeem *Interiors* as a "serious film," Benayoun defines Allen's efforts as "a cultural phenomenon" in the following way: "The intellectual and international ambitions behind *Interiors* suggest that Woody Allen is staging Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as it might have been reworked by Strindberg or O'Neill, engraved by Munch, painted by Nolde and imbued with music (for the inward ear) by Mahler" (93). Hailed by critics as "the flowering of [Allen's] 'serious comedy' style" (McCann 235) — the fine balance between comedy and tragedy, which he had been developing since *Love and Death* — the composition of *Hannah and Her Sisters* is inspired by two Russian narrative models: Chekhov for "his musical texture and multiple points of view" and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* "for its parallel plot lines: first, an adulterous affair, second, people's quest for meaning and happiness" (McCann 235). The treatment of the issues, however, is presented in the traditional Allen manner, succinctly defined by McCann in the following paragraph:

> Allen allows his characters to glimpse the abyss and then, at the last moment, pulls them back, closing with a round of marriages and an enchantingly romantic flourish. His thematic point, in fact, is that comedy itself (along with love) can help us reconcile ourselves to a cruel, absurd universe. (240)

Quite often Allen reworks the big issues posed by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky by invoking the repressed neurosis and modernist sensibility that underlies Chekhov's works. This eclectic conjoining is evident at the end of *Manhattan*, in the scene where Ike is lying in his apartment and contemplating existential issues. There is a close-up of Ike's tape recorder recording Ike's voice offscreen:

> Isaac: An idea for a short story about, um, people in Manhattan who, uh, who are constantly creating these real, uh, unnecessary neurotic problems for themselves 'cause it keeps them from dealing with, uh, more unsolvable, terrifying problems about, uh, the universe... Um — it's, uh, well, it has to be optimistic. Well, all right, why is life worth living? That's a very good question. Um, well, there are certain things I—I guess that make it worthwhile. Uh, like what? Okay. Um, for me, oh, I would say, what, Groucho Marx, to name one thing, uh, um, and,

> Willie Mays, and um, uh, the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony, and um, Louie Armstrong's recording of "Potatohead Blues," um, Swedish movies, naturally *Sentimental Education* by Flaubert, uh, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra, um, those incredible apples and pears by Cézanne, uh, the crabs at Sam Wo's, uh, Tracy's face...
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

In "Retribution" (*Side Effects*), the narrator describes his gorgeous, erudite girlfriend, Connie, as possessing "an inferiority complex rivaling Franz Kafka's" who considered herself "a dumpy little nonentity, who had no business trying to be an actress, much less attempting Chekhov" (*The Complete Prose of Woody Allen* 451). The reverse evocation occurs in *Radio Days* where the ignorant and naive Sally White (Mia Farrow) manages to land a part in a radio-broadcast of a Chekhov play, helped by the mobster Rocco (Danny Aiello). In a typically Chekhovian tragi-comic resolution, she is unable to actually perform because the broadcast coincides with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and causes the preempting of the programme.

In fact, a strong Chekhovian spirit is present throughout *Radio Days*. As Yacowar points out, the family structure and the various relationships depicted are reminiscent of *The Three Sisters*: "Joey's family recalls Allen's three-sister Chekhovian families in *Interiors* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*. Where Sally compromises everything by her ambition and Bea will compromise nothing, Joey's mother, Tess, and Aunt Cecil realistically accept mates short of their ideal" (*Loser Takes All* 257-58). Dianne Wiest renders a poignant performance as Aunt Bea with her futile hopes and self-inflicted blindness to the harshness of the surrounding world. Finally, the end of the film establishes a direct textual bridge with the end of *The Three Sisters*. In a foolishly optimistic outburst, Olga embraces her two sisters and gives expression to her greater hopes for the future:

> Olga: ...Time will pass and we shall be gone forever. We shall be forgotten, and people will no longer remember our voices or our faces or how many of us there were. But our sufferings will pass into joy for those who live after us....
>
> (IV, 184)

Olga's futile elation highlights Chekhov's ironic stance on the level of ideology. The sisters will never return to Moscow and their old way of life, yet they are unable to escape the world of illusion they live in. Allen echoes the same concerns about the mercilessness of the passage of time and the ultimate human transitoriness no matter what we do or who we are. In *Radio Days*, the Masked Avenger (Wallace Shawn)[1] nostalgically captures this feeling of a bygone era and expresses the same sentiments through an almost word-for-word paraphrase of Olga's speech, which, however, is devoid of any romanticism:[2]

> Masked Avenger: I wonder if the future generations will ever hear about us. It's not likely. Not enough time. Everything passes. I don't care how big we are or how important in their lives.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

The concurrent voice of the omniscient cinematic narrator (Woody Allen) that frames the magical New Years' Eve of 1944 highlights the feeling of nostalgia for a bygone era intermingled with an apprehension of what the future may hold for the generations to come. And, of course, in Allen's film about the theatre, *Bullets over Broadway*, the Russian dramatist once again is a prominent presence whose functional importance goes beyond the dream that David Shayne (John Cusack) has to become "the new Chekhov." In *Bullets over Broadway* — where the borderline between life and art is totally blurred and life is literally sacrificed in the name of art — the issues of the moral responsibility of the artist refer us to *The Seagull*, while the rifle that fires really kills.[3]

Chekhov's problematic is also peripherally actualized in *Zelig*.[4] Any informed reader of Chekhov will be able to discern a similarity between the Russian writer and Allen in their tragi-comic treatment of conformism. Zelig's incessant efforts to accommodate to the standards of others find a comparable treatment in Chekhov's stories "Chameleon" ("Khameleon," 1884) and "The Darling" ("Dushechka," 1898) The protagonists, Ochumelov and Olenka, respectively, possess the extraordinary ability to transform themselves according to the circumstances and to mirror the beliefs and values of the surrounding community. Ochumelov remains an utterly despicable character whose sole concern is to keep on the good side of those in power and as such is portrayed as devoid of any human traits. Olenka's character, however, is more subtly constructed. In spite of all her efforts to efface herself and thus gain some some stability in her life, her efforts remain in vain. Like Zelig, Olenka's happiness is shortlived and plagued by disappointment. The real tragedy of the story is contained in the fact that in the end, the protagonist is left with nothing except an illusion of having achieved something, namely, little Sasha. But as with Zelig, whose miraculous "cure" and his future life deny us any type of real closure because of their ambiguous unresolvedness, so with Olenka we become acutely aware that the idyllic relationship with her foster child is illusory and doomed.

According to a different reading of "The Darling" (see Kramer, for example), Olenka's overt passivity is in fact her insidious weapon to dominate and destroy all the men who get in touch with her. She literally sucks out the sap out of them and leaves them no possibility to recover. Viewed in this framework, Sasha subconsciously seems to be the only one fighting to overcome her stifling parasitism. Curiously, this more "unorthodox" view of Chekhov's heroine has a remarkable parallel in a skit in Allen's *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex** that was deleted from the film version for American audiences, although it has survived in some European copies. In the episode "What Makes a Man a Homosexual?" Allen employs the device of the literalization of the metaphor, an approach that brings him very close to Gogol, as well — formally, by the use of anthropomorphization; idelogically, by the extremely misogynist perspective adopted. The sequence features Sheldon (Woody Allen) and Lisa (Louise Lasser) as black-widow spiders who engage in a sexual act. After the act, the female devours her partner. The final shot reveals that the scene is being observed by an entomologist (Woody Allen). When his secretary (Louise Lasser) comes into the lab, he addresses her with a stereotypical homosexual lisp, suggesting that women are viewed as a menace and as destructive to men. The entomology subtext subtly actualizes the whole trend of scientific positivism that is quite evident in Chekhov's numerous doctors and scientists and at the same time evokes sexual innuendoes that have been given vivid cinematic treatment in the recent film *Angels and Insects* (1997, dir. Philip Haas), for instance.

The overall impact of Chekhov's work on Allen's should be seen as a composite aggregate. It is further complicated by Allen's eclectic appropriation of Chekhovian material in his dramatic constructions. In other words, Allen's implementation of Chekhov's writing in his films pertains to elements found both in his plays and prose. Thus, the ideological core of Allen's films and short plays consists in posing the global philosophical problems of tragic alienation, individual isolation, and acute crises of family relationships. In *Interiors* as his first non-comical pastiche, Allen obviously exploits the plot structure of *The Three Sisters*, who "talk too much and say too little" (Maslin 1978). Yet, what has usually been disregarded by critics and scholars is the fact that Allen's handling of spatial forms further highlights his kinship with the Russian writer. From this point of view, *Interiors* is a good illustration of the specificity of Allen's cinematic reworking of Chekhov's dramas that transcends the generic definition of "a Chekhovian vision of an O'Neill family, expressed with Bergmanesque rigor" (Yacowar).

Allen's approach to the transposition of Chekhov's poetics onto the screen can be defined as follows: he borrows the basic principles of spatial organization in the film narrative from both Chekhov's short stories *and* dramas. The primary spatial oppositions that emerge in *Interiors*, for instance, can be traced not so much to Chekhov's dramas, but rather to his short stories. In Chekhov's plays spatial forms fulfill a purely framework function, establishing the setting for the dialogues. Even if we have an obvious symbolic spatial formation, as is the case with the "cherry orchard," this formation is not presented on stage in its wholeness; in fact, it is intentionally kept outside the stage. In Allen's film, on the other hand, one of its most conspicuous poetical characteristics is the director's modelling of a spatial opposition between open and closed spaces which is thoroughly exploited by him even though a similar juxtaposition is not presented in Chekhov's plays.

Obviously, the settings of *The Three Sisters* and *Interiors* are quite distanced from each other. Allen entirely changes the chronotope, placing his three sisters in a contemporary American milieu. In films such as *Annie Hall*, *Manhattan*, and *Hannah and Her Sisters*, the subdued Chekhovian conflicts unfold against the background of Allen's favourite ever-present New York setting with its streets and high-rise apartments. *Interiors*, however, is a clear deviation from the Allenesque poetics. Film critics point out the foreign nature of *Interiors* in the overall framework of Allen's art. For *Cahiers du cinéma* critic Bill Krohn, it is a "melodrama" which deserves some attention, but in general it suffers from bad, un-Allenesque dialogue whose narrative freedom, "composé de plans fixes de personnages statiques," is restricted by the four Aristotelian unities ("Juste avant l'Oscar" 20). According to Canby, "*Interiors* looks beautiful. [Its] cool colors ... suggest civilization's precious control of natural forces.... [The characters] seem socially disconnected from the world around them as they are emotionally and psychically disconnected from one another.... I haven't any real idea what the film is up to." Maslin sees *Interiors* as "the dark side of *Annie Hall*." If *Annie Hall* can be defined as a "nervous romance," then *Interiors* is "its genteel nightmare."

The action in *Interiors* takes place in New York residences and in a beach-house. Both are characterized by their unnaturally refined and artificial interiors with predominantly pale white hues metaphorically connoting chill, insensitivity and disruption. While in traditional Allen poetics the interiors are depicted as natural and ordinary, in *Interiors* it is constantly stressed that they are created by the taste and will of one single person, Eve (Geraldine Page).[5] This is the qualification given by her husband Arthur (E.G.Marshall) at the very beginning of the film: "The truth is: she created the world around us that we existed in, where everything had its place, where there was always a kind of harmony, or dignity. I will say it was like an ice-palace." The pale ice of the interiors in the film can be changed only by an outsider who bears no relation whatsoever to Eve or her family. Such a person, the very down-to-earth, sensualist Pearl (Maureen Stapleton), symbolically obliterates the paleness by wearing her blatantly red dress at her wedding to Arthur in the bleak interiors of the beach-house. The motif of unnatural cold is also introduced in the opening scene of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* : Olga recollects that their father died on the 5 of May, and it was snowing and very cold that day. In the same passage she notices the white colour of Irina's dress. Thus, Olga's opening speech carries very strong obvious reminiscences of death, unnatural snow in May, and white hues.

There are only two outdoor scenes in the film, both highlighting the intended spatial symbolism. The usual concreteness of the New York environment typical of Allen's films seems deliberately avoided in the scene of the ambulance taking Eve to hospital after her suicide attempt. In the second outdoor episode, when Eve, Renata (Diane Keaton), and Joey (Marybeth Hurt) are walking in the sanatorium park, there are no shots that situate the park within a city context. The park is represented absolutely separately from its urban environment.

Another more obvious deviation is accomplished with the introduction of an estate situated on the coast of the Atlantic ocean. With it a spatial opposition is established: the juxtaposition between the beach-house and the ocean. Since there is no such opposition in Chekhov's play considered to be one of the sources for the film, it is important to determine, nonetheless, whether it is inherent in his poetical system, or, conversely, whether it can be viewed as innovative elements on the part of the director.

Although the juxtaposition of river and house is not outwardly sought and established by Chekhov in his dramas, it is nevertheless present in his texts, allowing for its meaningful exploitation on the part of the director. For example, in his short story "About Love" we come across the following scene: "Burkin and Ivan Ivanych went out on the balcony, from which there was a fine view of the garden and the river, which was shining now in the sunshine like a mirror" (*Anton Chekhov's Short Stories* 201).

Conventionally, the ocean in Allen can be interpreted as a substitute image of the river. Regardless of the fact that the action of none of Chekhov's dramas takes place at the seaside, the opposition between the transitory nature of the city and the eternity of the sea is presented in his short story "The Lady with the Dog":

> When they got out of the carriage at Oréanda they sat down on a bench not far from the church, and looked down at the sea.... The sea had roared like this long before there was any Yalta or Oreanda, it was roaring now, and it would go on roaring, just as indifferently and hollowly, when we had passed away. And it may be that in this continuity, this utter indifference to the life and death of each of us lies hidden the pledge of our eternal salvation, of the continuous movement toward perfection. (*Anton Chekhov's Short Stories* 226)

The river in Chekhov and the ocean in Allen are directly connected with the theme of suicide. This theme, along with the murder theme, is widely presented in Chekhov's plays. Drowning as a method of death although not encountered on stage, appears in his plays as an off-stage reality: in *The Cherry Orchard* Ranevskaya recalls her son's accidental drowning (Act II). The motif of the drowning character finds its filmic, "on-stage," realization in *Interiors* .

Interiors begins just like *The Three Sisters*: on a reminiscent note about the death of a family member. In the play, the very first lines spoken by Olga are a flashback about her father's death exactly a year before. In the opening shots of the film, Joey, Renata, and Arthur recollect moments about their common life with Eve, an indication that she is no longer alive. The ending is equally Chekhovian in its open-ended ambiguity with the three sisters staring at the dark waters. The scene is charged with the characters' almost palpable wishful thinking for a better future and the omnisicent camera's mocking visualization that it is too late for a new life. Fox highlights this ironic ambivalence: "Only the very uncharitable might enquire of them, how long before they get to Moscow" (106).

The structure of the film with its flashbacks and parallel montage reconstructs the course of events leading to Eve's death. The film develops the motif of Eve's obsessive desire to return to the sea, just as Chekhov's heroines have the tendency "to look for escape from the burden of social living by submission, in death, to Nature" (Tulloch 133). This motif coincides with the motif of the return to the house: after Arthur's sudden decision to separate from her, Eve leaves their beach-house and settles in New York. She feels her absolute incompatibility with her newly acquired outer world and while looking at an urban landscape through the window, she whispers: "I miss the sea." She makes one attempt to commit suicide by means of gas suffocation while still in the city. This attempt coincides with the recurrent image of the closed, confined space. Eve meticulously tries to tape the windows and to evade the disturbing contact with the outer world. When she tries to die in a closed space, she fails. When eventually she does succeed, it is at the open ocean.

For Eve the contact with the outer world turns out to be fatal. In spite of her words, she wants to return to the house, but not to the sea. She feels safe only in the interiors she herself has created. In other words, she becomes the embodiment of "the typical Chekhovian dilemma of a character trapped or imprisoned in a life or philosophy that is represented by the concrete elements of a house. The freshness or freedom of the outside world is tantalizingly visible yet inaccessible" (Aronson 202).

Although the objective to achieve the separation, and hence liberation, of the individual from the house, is potentially present in Chekhov's plays and stories, not one of them achieves it. As Chekhov describes Voinitsky's room in *Uncle Vanya* :

> At the window, a large table with account books and all sorts of papers, a bureau, cupboards, scales. A smaller table for Astrov with paints and drawing materials; beside it, a portfolio. A cage with a starling. *On the wall, a map of Africa, apparently of no use to anyone*. An enormous sofa covered with American cloth. (Act IV; emphasis added)

On a more global level, this leitmotif defines the whole plot. Thus, in *The Three Sisters,* the heroines will never leave their house in the small provincial town, they will never move to Moscow, which metonymically represents the unattainable outer world of Nature with its harmony and happiness. Similarly, in *Interiors* Flyn, the actress sister, informs that the film she is currently starring in is being shot in the Rockies of Colorado. While making this statement, she longingly dreams about working on the sunny beaches of Acapulco. However, "all these myths which relate man to Nature are escapist dreams. And Nature in turn remains insensate and cold" (Tulloch 135): Eve's eventual "success" at achieving this blending is death.

The director pays meticulous attention to the presentation of the internal diegetic space in the film. The beach-house is depicted precisely in conformity with the way Chekhov prescribed the presentation of the interiors in all his plays — through minute details with respect to ambiance, furniture, decoration, etc. In *Interiors,* this is emphasized in the scenes where Eve is perpetually engaged in acts of interior decoration and refurnishing. Her occupation is presented in obsessive dimensions, showing her constantly reorganizing not only her own home, but permanently trying to interfere and redesign the internal surroundings of Joey's apartment. Eve cannot exist outside the detailed, aesthetically-furnished setting, since in Chekhov, unlike in Dostoevsky, the personage cannot be extracted from the situationally tangible environment ("U

Chekhova takoe nevozmozhno. Personazh ne mozhet byt' izvlechen iz situatsionno-veshchnogo okruzheniia," Chudakov 160).

At the very beginning of the film, Eve is discussing the purchase of an expensive vase with Mike (Sam Waterston), Joey's live-in boyfriend. She insists that they obtain the antique for their *intérieur* even though they cannot afford it. This small detail eventually is transformed into a Chekhovian rifle that by the end of the film sets off with disastrous consequences which foreshadow the human tragedy: after her wedding, the drunken Pearl inadvertently breaks another vase of Eve's in the beach-house. The same strategy is used in Allen's 1995 one-act play "Central Park West." Even though the play is set in contemporary upper-middle-class New York, the underlying conflicts are Chekhovian by virtue of the unspoken hostilities and total lack of communication. There again, a broken statuette symbolizes a broken relationship.

The furniture, vases, mirrors, statuettes in *Interiors* are presented as completely blending into the environment. The picture contains numerous Chekhovian scenes of family eating rituals (tea parties, luncheons, cocktail gatherings) also incorporated into the interiors. The family and guests practically merge into the surroundings and sometimes are reduced to obligatory components of the house's interiors. Allen fully implements the principles of Chekhov's description as outlined by Chudakov:

> Representation in the pre-Chekhovian literary tradition consists of a shot where one particular central object is focused, while the remaining ones are depicted out of focus, or altogether remain entirely outside the frame of the lens.
>
> Chekhovian representation is the process of shooting without having the lens focused on one particular object. In this case, other objects are also incorporated into the shot: not only those objects which enter the shot in their own right in accordance with their role in the episode of the plot, but also such objects which have absolutely no functional importance

> and "accidentally" turned out to be next to the plot-significant ones. (my translation)[6]

The typical setting for the majority of Chekhov's plays and stories is in the interiors of the countryside manor or the town house. The opposition of the restricted house versus the boundless outside world is not found in Chekhov's plays, but it is present in his stories. Thus, one of Chekhov's inveterate romantics claims:

> To escape from the town, from the struggle, from the noise of life, to escape and hide one's head on a country-estate, is not life, but egotism, idleness, it is a sort of renunciation, but renunciation without faith. It is not six feet of earth, not a country-estate, but the whole of nature, room to display his qualities and the individual characteristics of his free soul. ("Gooseberries," *Anton Chekhov's Short Stories* 188)

Allen builds up his film through the emphasis of the significance of the houses, since he — like the sarcastic Chekhov — deliberately undermines the above pathetic exclamation. Avoiding the contacts with the outer world, confining oneself to the closed spaces of the interiors, to wit, *returning to the house* — this is one of the most essential Chekhovian leitmotifs. It is equally important for Allen for whom "The natural world — the country — is an alien land, disturbing and in some ways belittling his creative appetite" (McCann 41). This significance of the house accounts for the crucial importance Arthur attributes to his decision, albeit ambiguous, to venture outside of its repressive constraints: "So consequently, I have decided to move out of the house.... I feel it's something I have to try. As I say, it's not an irrevocable situation."

The theme of the house receives a somewhat different, yet equally Chekhovian, treatment in *September*.[7] Fox quotes Allen as saying that "like *Interiors*, the house in *September* was a key character in the story and in this case was actually the inspiration for the script" (184). Krohn sees a connection between *Interiors* and *September* on the level of characterization and plot development, as well. For him, the conflicts revolve around the same three protagonists as in *Interiors*: "une mère dévorante, un père faible, une fille suicidaire" with an additional group of characters all making up "une ronde d'amoureux mal aimés." The only absence is that of Pearl, "la belle-mère vulgare, vitale."

In general, the film is a loose reworking of *The Seagull* (see also Fox 184). Once again, the action takes place in a summer house in the countryside. And just as in Chekhov's play there is a small group of characters pursuing the wrong object of desire. The glamorous, selfish stage queen Irina Arkadina metamorpohoses into Diane (Elaine Stritch), a former Hollywood star whose life evokes that of Lana Turner. Her daughter Lane (Mia Farrow) displays the same ambivalent love-hate feelings towards her mother as Chekhov's Konstantin Treplev. Treplev's tragic and pathetic devotion to Nina Zerchnaya is mirrored both by Howard's (Denholm Elliott) unrequited love for Lane and Lane's attraction for Peter (Sam Waterston). Peter himself is a reincarnation of Boris Trigorin with his arrogance and calculating self-interest even though he has not yet achieved Trigorin's fame. As in Chekhov's drama much of the film's effect depends on the nuances in pacing and mood. The prolonged sequences of strained silence are as meaningful as the uttered angst-ridden dialogue uttered by the various characters.

Another Chekhovian thematic link is established through the motif of the sale of the estate and the parting with the old life. As in *The Cherry Orchard*, one of the main conflicts in Allen's film concerns the sale of the summer house. Canby elaborates on the stylistic kinship between Allen and Chekhov:

> It's as if Chekhov had decided to rewrite *Ghosts*, without letting the ghosts out of the closet ... the characters have no relation to the furniture and other objects in what is supposed to be a house of beloved memories. Also nobody eats ... here one suspects there's never been a

> meal prepared in the kitchen ... it's obvious that the bottles of Smirnoff are full of tap water ... drinking seems like a stage business.

On the level of spatial organization, the film is static and theatrical, structured as a chamber drama where the outer world remains merely a symbolic construct. Our field of vision as audience, however, is constrained by the walls and thresholds of the house. The pervasive hermeticism of the closed spaces is reflected by Canby in his somewhat critical review of the film, notably entitled "Close Quarters":

> There may be a world outside, but the audience cannot see it. This house could be drifting in the universe that someone describes as "haphazard, morally neutral and unimaginatively violent." Within these restricted quarters six people play out an earnest, 24-hour game of injustice-collecting.

Thus, while the opposition of closed versus open spaces is not expressed with the same visual style as in *Interiors*, it is, nevertheless, a ubiquitous idea. References are constantly made to other, non-domestic spaces. Even if the house does lack the warmth and connectedness of a true home and reinforces the sterility that seems to permeate the relations between all the characters, it is still a safe, known space. This paradoxical statement becomes more plausible once it is contextualized in the existential problematic introduced with Lloyd's character. As a physicist, Lloyd (Jack Warden) is concerned with confronting the "ineluctable doom in the universe and in individual life" (Yacowar, *Loser Takes All* 49). He studies the random nature of existence, acutely aware of the fact that "it's just a temporary convulsion" and that everything will "vanish forever — the universe, all space, all time" (49). The idea of the annihilating force of nature finds expression through the pathetic fallacy in the raging storm. Allen's view here overlaps with Chekhov's understanding of "Nature as indifferent to man's happiness, his cares, and his concerns" (Conrad 94). The director, however, remains consistent in his poetic concept and only allows us to hear — but not see — it. The visual restraint heightens the film's symbolism by reinforcing the ambiguity and the sense of inscrutability.

Similar to *September*, in "Central Park West," the confining parameters of the apartment engulf the entire stage. The characters are as if trapped in the cold interiors of Phyllis and Sam's apartment; gradually, it becomes clear that they are trapped in a pseudo-interaction that, like the tasteful decoration of their surroundings, is nothing more but a masterful façade that has begun crumbling. Unfortunately, unlike Arthur who is able to escape before it is too late, there is no solution for Sam. The Chekhovian rifle is present there in the form of a German Luger waiting to be functionalized. Yet, the resolution here is bathetic rather than tragic, as is the case with Eve. Instead of committing suicide or being murdered by his wife, Sam is accidentally shot in the ass. In the end, Sam is still in the apartment — left by his friends and his two lovers — unable to sever his connection with the house. His failed attempt to leave his wife and to move to London — yet another remote and symbolic space — with his twenty-year old lover in fact reinforces a leitmotif in Chekhov's *oeuvre*: the merging between individual and house and the impossibility to break away from it. In this context, the house becomes a symbol of numbing conditioned life while the outer world — be it Moscow, London, or Egypt — predominantly possesses the features of a hostile, alien, threatening environment.

The symbolic significance of the house becomes even clearer if we take into account another Allen film with a Chekhovian setting, *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*. The action takes place in "the stylised countryside of Chekhov" (Baxter 312) where an East Coast country house is "set deep in a rural never-neverland at the turn of the century" (Pym, "Well-Moused, Lion"). The primary hypertexts are Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955) and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*[8] The Chekhovian layer is more subtle and emerges in the dreamy and idyllic atmosphere, although, cinematically speaking, it is mediated by Max Reinhardt's 1935 *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream and Jean Renoir's *Une partie de campagne* (*A Day in the Countryside,* 1936), *La règle de jeu* (*The Rules of the Game,* 1939), and *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*Picnic on the Grass,* 1960) (see also Pogel 155-56; Lee 133-35). The underlying idea of the film is an optimistic celebration of the natural world; yet the "new hopefulness here, the air of romantic promise in which the story takes place, go against the grain of almost everything else Mr. Allen has done," claims Janet Maslin ("Shunning Mastery"). In another review, entitled "Sunny Effort," she acknowledges that while at times the film "has the beauty of an Impressionist painting" it, nonetheless, "gives the impression of someone speaking fluently but formally *in a language not his own*" (emphasis added).

Nature is inherently malevolent for Allen. He consistently gives a visual representation of this belief. In addition to anchoring firmly his plots in the urban New York milieu, his films abound in references that explicitly express his dislike of nature. In *Bananas*, Brode identifies "visual clues," stylistic devices used to imply a particular mood. Thus, the good outcomes for Fielding Mellish (Woody Allen) are shot with the camera tight on the characters while bad outcomes are visually marked by a long shot *with some aspects of nature* "framing the edges of the image, then zooming past this frame into the characters' confrontation" (102). In *Annie Hall,* the following exchange takes place between Alvy (Woody Allen) and his ex-wife Robin (Janet Margolin):

> Robin: ...My analyst says I should live in the country and not in New York.
>
> Alvy: Well, I can't li— We can't have this discussion all the time. The country makes me nervous. There's... You got crickets and it-it's quiet ... there's no place to walk after dinner, and ... uh, there's the screens with the dead moths behind them, and ... uh, yuh got the-the Manson family possibly, yuh got Dick and Terry— (*Four Films of Woody Allen* 29)

In *Manhattan*, Ike's (Woody Allen) romantic rowboat outing is comically interrupted when he sticks his hand in the water and upon taking it out finds it covered with mud and dirt. Many other examples expressing Allen's adverse attitude to nature can be found in his films. It is succinctly summed up by Lax in his discussion of the preparation for the shooting of *September*:

> The story is a drama with flashes of comedy that spring from the characters' personalities. If that action and the action taking place in the country sound reminiscent of, say, Chekhov or Turgenev, it was not completely unintentional, even though considering his view of nature, a summer house is an unlikely spot for Woody's attention. Actually, the film was shot indoors on a soundstage.
>
> (*Woody Allen* 352)

Moreover, although Allen uses Chekhov's *The Seagull* as a starting point, he disregards the symbolism of the bird. In fact, he substitutes the hunting mataphor for a romantic chase at the end. Unlike Trigorin, Peter not only does not pursue Lane, but he is attracted to Stephanie (Dianne Wiest). Leonid Grossman gives a romanticized reading of the seagull as a symbol of unhappiness that applies both to Nina and humanity in general (34-35). In *September*, Allen is equally concerned with unhappiness but he focusses on this existential dimension by transcending nature, by literally negating its metaphysical powers, and deconstruncting it to mere atoms and electrons motivated by Lloyd's profession as a physicist. In fact, the last sequence of the film in which Stephanie consoles Lane about the possibilities of the future and talks her out of her suicidal tendencies indirectly actualizes the ambiguity-, irony-, and *poshlost'*-charged endings of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and *The Three Sisters*:

> Stephanie: Tomorrow will come and you will find some distractions. You'll sell this place and move back to the city. You'll work. You'll fall

> in love. And maybe it will work out and maybe it won't. But you'll find a million petty things to keep you going.
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

The film ends with an invisible temporal fastforwarding, with the two women sitting at the table — like Vanya and Sonya — involved in utter trivialities. The last words heard are Stephanie's "it's chilly. In a few days it will be September."

That is precisely why, in the context of his overall artistic production, *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* is somewhat naive. Even if on the surface it suggests to have established a dialogical link to the classical Hollywood films of the 1930s where nature becomes a catalyst for the characters' regaining of their peace of mind, the final outcome is unconvincing. The turn-of-the-century landscape scenery remains a façade, a picturesque, old-fashioned container to accommodate anachronistic modern attitudes; yet, no real connection is established. In that sense, in *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* Allen follows the spatial organization of Chekhov's plays, where the different locations play only a literal, decorative function. The events are widely dispersed and their disposition is conditioned only by the cause-and-effect relationship within the plot. *The Three Sisters* and *Uncle Vanya* evoke vast expanses of off-stage geography that often carry exotic overtones. In another play, *Platonov,* the offstage space once again has a very wide amplitude: the characters mention the neighbouring villages and estates, the surrounding countryside, the bright city lights of Kiev, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Paris.

In fact, Allen's construction of his universe through the mediation of the Russian modernist writer and playwright invites a comparison with the Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov whose cinematic *oeuvre* is heavily immersed in Chekhovian poetics: *Unfinished Piece for Player Piano* (*Neokonchennaia p'esa dl'a mekhanicheskogo pianino*, 1977), *Five Evenings* (*Piat' vecherov*, 1980), *The Slave of Love* (*Raba liubvi*, 1981), *Dark Eyes* (*Ochi chernye*, 1987), *Burnt by the Sun* (*Utomlennye solntsem*, 1995). In all of them, Mikhalkov has an eclectic, kaleidoscopic approach to Chekhov's material creating his scripts on the basis of compilations from the writer's varied literary production. The result is a curious blend of subject matter and style that brings Mikhalkov and Allen under a common denominator.[9] Thus, discussing Mikhalkov's adaptation "of Chekhov's portraits of neurotic failures in a collapsing culture" in his *Unfinished Piece for Player Piano*, Jaehne observes that "Mikhalkov has managed to project a twentieth-century malaise onto the Soviet screen, whereas this sort of thing is usually associated with the late Woody Allen" (16). This is not the only parallel concerning the two directors' readings of Chekhov. Another comparison is made with respect to character creation:

> Eleni [sic] Solovei plays Sophia with the disarming naïveté of Diane Keaton's Annie Hall, surrounded by characters bedevilled by passions and simultaneous doubts about those passions, so thoroughly absorbed in themselves as to remain spiritual deaf-mutes to others' passions. (Jaehne 17)

In his analysis of *The Steppe* Jackson quotes Chekhov's remark in which he considers Russian suicides as a natural outcome of the torturous dialogue between the little man and the immense Russian spaces. Jackson writes:

> Striking in Chekhov's remarks is not only his shift of the problem of the Russian suicide from the attic to the steppe, i.e., out of the stuffy chambers of an urban philistine or intellectual, but his conception of space, too much space, disorienting space as a central problem of Russian man and history. (429)

Transposing Chekhov from the purely national sphere into the universal plane, Allen resolves this problem in favour of the house, because the little man, whether he be the impoverished Russian gentry or the affluent New York intellectual, in closed spaces becomes more self-sufficient and acquires a greater stature and security. Thus, one of the members of the "gruppo di famiglia interno," Renata in *Interiors* asks: "God, isn't it strange being back in the house again?"

NOTES

[1] Not only is Wallace Shawn one of the Woody Allen regulars and to some extent a *doppelgänger* figure in the his cinematic *oeuvre*. His name and image also bring forth connotations with Chekhov since he stars in the title role of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in Louis Malle's *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994). His rendition of Vanya as a superfluous man subtly blends the Russian turn-of-the century *malaise* with the Jewish American *nebbish* persona.

[2] Compare Fox's similar view of the Masked Avenger who "in reflective rather than heroic guise, offers his companions a Chekhovian valediction to a vanishing era and the transitoriness of their own fame" (179).

[3] On the connection between *The Seagull* and *Bullets over Broadway*, see Stenberg's recent article "Who Shot the Seagull? Anton Chekhov's Influence on Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*."

[4] In passing, it is worth mentioning that Fox traces yet another indirect "Russian connection" with respect to the film. In his discussion of the literary models for the film, he identifies the texts of R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Herman Melville's story "The Confidence Man," Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*. Fox also suggests that the inspiration for the film "may well have been drawn from an even earlier 'Zelig,' an obscure short story by Benjamin Rosenblatt 'about a lonely and alienated

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Russian Jewish immigrant,' published in the *Bellman* and collected in *The Best Short Stories of 1915*" (145).

[5] Maslin supports this idea in her review where she claims that "the refined, rarefied look of the film is a function of Eve."

[6] "Изображение в дочеховской литературной традиции – снимок, где наводка на резкость делается по одному, центральному объекту, а все прочие выходят нерезко или вообще не попадают в объектив. Изображение чеховское – съемка объективом, не наведенным на один предмет. В этом случае на снимок попадают и другие предметы – не только те, которые входят в кадр по праву в соответствии со своею ролью в эпизоде, сюжете, но и те, которые никакой роли в нем не играют, а ьоказалисьь рядом с предметом, сюжетно важным" (151).

[7] In his biography, Lax quotes Allen's remarks to Mia Farrow's suggestion that the film be shot in her Connecticut country home: "I thought, 'What a Chekhovian atmosphere this is'.... It's a house on many acres, isolated, by a little lake. There are trees, and a field here, a swing there. It suggested to me right away the kind of locale in the stories of Turgenev and Chekhov, which have a certain amount of comedy in them. It's not real comedy but, I guess, comedy of desperation and anxiety'" (*Woody Allen* 353).

[8] Pym provides a list of the most obvious common themes and motifs. According to him, Allen directly borrows from Bergman the character types and the intricate relationships among them: the inexperienced wife (Mary Steenburgen) worried by the arrival of a guest who apparently has been involved with her husband; the guests who correspond to those in Eva Dahlbeck's mansion; the playful partner exchange in the course of the night; the strange effects of the midsummer night — a motif considerably exploited in folklore, by writers such as Gogol and Turgenev; in film, it is foregrounded in Mike Newell's *Enchanted April* (1992) where the Italian rural setting has a similar effect. The Shakespearian connection can be seen through the husband's infatuation with Ariel (Mia Farrow) and the "spirit box" which at the end of the

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film sends out peablossoms and mustardseeds into the woods. Another immediate evocation is achieved through Mendelssohn's luscious score.

[9] For a detailed analysis of Allen's *Interiors* and Mikhalkov's *Unfinished Piece for Player Piano*, see Deltcheva and Vlasov, "Back to the House."

CHAPTER VIII

Allen's Dispute with Dostoevsky

> **"Dostoevsky, if he could sing, would sound like Ray Charles." (Woody Allen, qtd. in Benayoun 24)**

With Allen's greater sophistication as a writer and film director, his films become denser in their content. This movement is not only reflected by film critics, but it seems to be a source of controversy with respect to evaluating Allen's creative endeavours. His films from the 1980s and 1990s manifest an acute concern with philosophical issues such as God, the meaning of existence, the possibility for a meaningful relationship between men and women, the essence of desire, the sense of guilt, individual freedom and responsibility. These issues establish the ideological dimension of Allen's poetic paradigm and prompt his reorientation towards an exploration of mixed, comico-dramatic forms — a fact that accounts for the public indictment that he is no longer "funny."

Allen's inquiry into universal existential problems inevitably evokes the works of existential philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre. It is quite significant to point out, however, that while their thoughts are inherently felt in his films, Allen mediates this philosophical layer specifically through literature. Even in his most obviously philosophical cinematic exercise, *Another Woman* (1988), Heidegger's thought is mediated through the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. Two of the strongest literary mediators in Allen's films remain Fyodor Dostoevsky and Lev Tolstoy,[1] the writers who, according to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev, are unsurpassed in their "quest after the salvation of humanity" (qtd in Steiner 44). Dostoevsky's extreme situations in which crises pile one on top of the other without a moment of respite establish the poetic basis for Allen's most serious and ambitious cinematic exercises. Yet, it must be stressed that while with Tolstoy and Chekhov direct intertextual relations of varying degrees are visibly identifiable — be that in the form of quotation, allusion, pastiche, or parody — in the case of Dostoevsky Allen's dialogue becomes purely ideological. In his mature works, Allen does not rework or parody Dostoevsky's texts, but either uses them as a starting point or subtly works in his problematic in order to achieve his own rendition of existential issues raised by the Russian writer.

Curiously, all of Allen's Dostoevskian films have spurred discussions and controversies that continued long after the films had opened and shortly thereafter disappeared from the theatres. Thus, after the great success of *Manhattan*, Allen stunned both critics and audiences with his confessional cinematic narrative in *Stardust Memories*. The film is disturbing, spiteful, and provocative. In many respects it is the director's visual rendition of the famous opening words with which Dostoevsky's Underground man begins his enraged verbal outpour: "I am a sick man ... I am a spiteful man. I am an unpleasant man" (Ia chelovek bol'noi ... Ia zloi chelovek. Neprivlekatel'nyi ia chelovek") (*Notes from Underground* 3/*Zapiski iz podpol'ia* 5). Brian Henderson sums up this general perception of the protagonist Sandy Bates (Woody Allen) by pointing put that *Stardust Memories* thematizes "the character's narcissism and contempt for others" (47). Maslin calls it "audacious, scathing," and full of "acid humor from which no one, not even he, is exempt"; moreover, like the Underground man, "Sandy is a tired, unsympathetic figure standing alone" ("Comedian's Lament"). The two texts, Dostoevsky's and Allen's, share similar concerns: "the pains of love, trust and betrayal in sexual relationships, the tension between fantasy and reality, art and life" (Sinyard 60). They approach them from a highly subjective and personal point of view; yet, in their rambling, unstructured discourse, the voices of the epoch reverberate and transform the formal monologue into a complex dialogical clash of a multitude of positions and belief systems.

According to Sinyard, *Stardust Memories* is a companion piece to *Annie Hall*:

> *Annie Hall* was an autobiographical essay, written by the camera; *Stardust Memories* is a critical essay in celluloid, a resumé and assessment of Allen's own career and his screen persona... [it] has the brilliant idea of rendering the American Dream in the visual style of European alienation. (Sinyard 57-58)

One of Allen's goals in *Stardust Memories* is to highlight the artist's existential despair when he finds himself at a creative crossroads. This Dostoevskian examination of the artist's predicament is coupled with a Tolstoyan treatment of the recurrent theme of "man's relationship to his own mortality" (Allen, qtd. in Fox 117) and one's helpless awareness that eventually, we all come to the same end. Allen himself admits that his protagonist will hardly evoke compassion but at least he looks for some understanding. Sandy Bates is no Lev Myshkin; to some degree, he possesses some traits that make him resemble Ivan Karamazov but his closest literary antecedent still remains the Underground man. Allen defines him as "a very sick, neurotic, almost nervous breakdown director. I didn't want this guy to be necessarily likeable. I wanted him to be surly and upset; not a saint or an angel, but a man with real problems who finds that art doesn't save you, an idea I explored in *Interiors*" (qtd. in Fox 118). The protagonists of both *Notes from Underground* and *Stardust Memories* are probably two of the most unattractive, vile, angry characters in the Western cultural tradition. Yet, as such they possess an acute sense of seeing through the *façade* into the essence of things. They are transformed into a voice of conscience that bothers and thus awakens hostility and rejection, as if artistically confirming Marshall McLuhan's dictum:

> The poet, the artist, the sleuth — whoever sharpens our perception tends to be antisocial; rarely "well-adjusted," he cannot go along with currents and trends. A strange bond often exists among antisocial types in their power to see environments as they really are. (89)

The McLuhan connection is hardly gratuitous in view of the fact that the theorist himself makes a cameo appearance in *Annie Hall* and literally implements his statement into practice by bashing the pseudo-intellectual babble of a representative of the New York intelligentsia, very much like the Underground's man vicious attack on the dominant philosophical trends of nineteenth-century Russia.

In his philosophical discussion of Allen's films, Sander Lee analyzes Sandy Bates as a man who sees himself as a Nietzschean *Übermensch* and through the prism of Heidegger's notion of inauthenticity: given the circumstances that man is filled with dread at the realization of the inevitability of death, a situation may arise when the fear of non-being can trigger off the need for an authentic life. Lee explains,

> In the experience of dread, the authentic self issues a "call" to the inauthentic self. A person is called back to the true self and a realization that beneath the usual mask of indifference lies the emotion of honest caring for others. Through the unlocking of such emotion, authentic personhood may be obtained. However, if a person fails to respond to the call, that person is ... inauthentic.
>
> (123)

For Lee, this is the cause for Sandy's downfall. He fails to respond to the call for authenticity and chooses instead to hide from himself and the others through a self-induced act of blurring the distinction between reality and fantasy. The ultimate outcome is that he gradually succumbs to madness (124-26). Because he refuses authenticity, "Bates is the most despicable character of any of his [Allen's] films to date" (Lee 129).

While Lee's line of argumentation is solidly based in the principles of existential philosophy, it contradicts the overall premise of his book, namely that Allen is one of the twentieth-century great moralists. It becomes difficult to reconcile that general claim to the fact that Allen would choose for a protagonist such an utterly despicable character and transform his film into a study of madness. In the "Introduction" to his English translation of *Notes from Underground*, Ralph Matlaw states that Dostoevsky's confession is "first and foremost a work of fiction, not a philosophical tract" (xvi). The same premise should be applied to Allen's *Stardust Memories*. If anything, it is a "meta-film," a film about making a film. Compositionally, it is an extended monologue, cinematically rendered through numerous stylistic techniques and devices: temporal dislocations, flashbacks and flashforwards, oneiric sequences, framing, fragmentation, and bifurcation of the end. The result is a painful confession of a deeply troubled man who is unsatisfied with his success as an artist, who sees the superficiality and hypocrisy of the surrounding reality, but who — very much like Dostoevsky's anonymous narrator — cannot envisage his existence without the recognition of the same people he incessantly and bitterly spurns at every turn.

The real tragedy of the Underground man, within Dostoevsky's Christian outlook, is in his despair. The same despair governs the irrational behaviour of Sandy Bates who has established his name as comic film-maker. At the beginning of the film, we are confronted with a character who no longer wants to make comedies with happy endings because he realizes that they cannot reflect adequately the pain and misery that exist in the world. He is constantly searching for answers to his existential dilemmas but he finds no viable alternatives. Even his visionary encounter with some alien creatures who possess a much higher intellect than humans does not make things clearer:

> Sandy: ... you guys gotta tell me, why is there so much human suffering?
> Og: This is unanswerable.
> Sandy: Is there a God?
> Og: These are the wrong questions.

> Sandy: Look, here's my point. If nothing lasts, why am I bothering to-to make films, or do anything for that matter?
> Og: We enjoy your films. Particularly the early funny ones.
> Sandy: But the human condition is so discouraging.
> (transcript from the videofilm)

With his newly rationalized position Sandy is ideologically close to the Russian realist writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century who were engaged by the same kinds of metaphysical concerns. His reluctance to "make funnier movies" when the world is full of pain is indicative of an awakened sense of moral responsibility that he as a creative personality must embrace. There is a semi-conscious realization that Sandy's aesthetic uncertainties are integrally connected with his social answerability. This sense of commitment on the part of the protagonist establishes another ideological connection with the Russian writers who saw their function as being above all a social one, in service of the underprivileged: "In a real sense, the Russian novel is an extended gloss of the famous words Radishchev had uttered in the eighteenth century: 'My soul is overwhelmed by the the weight of human suffering'" (Steiner 42).

Similar to *Notes from Underground, Stardust Memories* begins with the end and then gradually weaves in fragmented narrative sequences that are intended to reconstruct the events that have led to this vision of utter despondency As Nancy Pogel explains, "*Stardust Memories* begins with Sandy's original, wholly pessimistic ending for his film; what follows is a series of recollections and experiences — dialogues between Sandy and himself and between Sandy and others — that either justify the ending or argue for less pessimistic alternatives" (135). Like the Underground man, who tries very hard to gain acceptance but is regarded as an absolute non-entity by everyone, including his servant, Sandy is faced with problems, conflicts, and obstacles on every level. In addition to the philosophic and aesthetic quests he must resolve, which establish a direct intertextual connection between him and Guido Anselmi (Marcello Mastroianni), Fellini's protagonist in *$8^1/_2$* (1963). Sandy

> must satisfy the commercial demands of filmmaking. He has difficulties with audiences and fans, with his secretary, his accountant, his taxes, his producers, his writers, with publicity people, and with studio executives. His personal life is integrally related to his troublesome creative life. He personally worries about aging and death, about cosmic entropy, about human suffering, and about family responsibilities. (Pogel 135)

As far as personal relationships are concerned, both protagonists remain unhappy and unfulfilled. The Underground man intentionally pushes away the prostitute Liza, the only one who sees him as a human being and offers him her love. For him, it is all an illusion, a partial solution which he exercises his free will to refuse. In a similar way, Sandy's memories of his unsuccessful affair with Dorrie (Charlotte Rampling) — one of the numerous "kamikadze women" that present a fatal attraction to the Allen persona — prevent him from making a commitment to Isobel (Marie-Christine Barrault). In the end, there is hardly any closure. As Pogel suggests, this ambiguity is caused by the artist's inability to find an acceptable outcome that would restore the aesthetic and real order in the postmodern condition: "Like *Interiors, Stardust Memories* opposes a wholly pessimistic perspective, but then, ultimately, places even its apparent resolution within an inconclusive frame" (146). One of the possible endings that Sandy chooses for his film — the happy moments with Dorrie and the embrace with Isobel on the train — suggests the Tolstoyan option of finding the meaning of life in life itself. This interpretation is supported by Allen's own admission to Gene Siskel:

> Finally, through the course of searching his own soul, at the end of the film ... he [Sandy] came to the conclusion that there are just some moments in life — that's all you have in life are moments, not your artistic achievements, not your material goods, not your fame or your

> money — just some moments, maybe with another person ... those little moments that are wonderful.
>
> ("Woody" 1; also qtd. in Pogel 148)

Yet, the film ends with Sandy leaving the theatre still confused, miserable, alone. His extended implicit dialogue with the world has not resolved anything. This rather defeatist stance was ironically justified extra-textually after the film opened. As if anticipating the reactions of viewers and critics alike, Allen's *Stardust Memories* made the director the prime target of the intellectuals' rage. Like the Underground man and Sandy Bates, the audiences, too, had lost their perspective and had completely forgotten the fine line between fact and fiction.

Even though Allen's subsequent cinematic production after *Stardust Memories* is a kind of a compliance with the recommendation to "tell funnier jokes," the films are qualitatively different from the director's vision in the 1970s. There is a consistent move towards a greater organicity of structure and a higher complexity of ideological articulation. The concerns remain the same, the style changes — and with it, the depth of probing. In 1991, Allen released *Shadows and Fog*, another black-and-white film based on his 1973 one-act play "Death." To date probably Allen's most obscure film — in the sense that it was generally ignored by audiences and by critics — it represents the mature artist's examination of his constant themes: death, god, guilt, paranoia, identity, our place in the universe. Visually an homage to the stylistics of German Expressionism, *Shadows and Fog*, according to Allen, comes closest to "a definitive dramatic metaphor" for the existential subjects that "to me are still the only subjects worth dealing with" (qtd. in Fox 220).

Shadows and Fog is set in a surreal, dream-like atmosphere, a kaleidoscopic array of images and ideas. According to Lee, ideologically, the film, whose primary focus is on identity and spirituality, offers several models for life: Kleinman's conservative lifestyle, the doctor's rationalist outlook, the sensualists' hedonism in the characters of the wealthy student and the clown; and Imry's quest to create joy through love and family. Through these models

Allen poses the question of the nature of reality where Kleinman's and Imry's positions are juxtaposed by the vigilantes' nihilistic views and unbridled violence. The latter's extreme brutality is comparable to Dostoevsky's vivid portrayal of the anarchist revolutionaries in *The Possessed* (*Bessy*).

Set in an indefinite and ethereal Central European locale that *Entertainment Weekly* critic Owen Gleiberman described as "Kafkaland" (qtd. in Fox 220), the film narrative follows one night in the life of the protagonist Kleinman (Woody Allen). The external action is triggered off by a number of mysterious murders that have taken place inducing the population to take justice in their hands and track down the serial killer. The film opens as Kleinman's conventionally predictable evening is violently interrupted and he is dragged out of bed to follow the vigilantes in carrying out "the plan." Naturally, Kleinman has no idea what the plan is but is fearful to admit it. Reluctantly, he gets dressed and joins the mob. There are subtle but unambiguous allusions to pre-World War II Germany in the enumeration of the possible suspects — notably, all Jewish representatives. A neighbour by the name of Mintz and his family have already been summoned for questioning, their ethnicity signalled by Mintz's occupation as a *mohel* who performs "quality circumcisions." Kleinman's attempt to intervene in favour of the family backfires and in fact turns him into a suspect, too.

In a parallel plot, the film narrative focusses on one of the favourite topoi of German Expressionism from Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1919) onwards — the circus or the fairground. With its essentially ambivalent ideological charge, the circus represents an ideal surrogate for the public square or the marketplace — the space designated for carnival. The carnivalesque essence of the circus/fairground is reflected in the metamorphoses of rogues into kings and travelling showmen into evil masterminds that occur there. The circus subplot follows the love story between Irmy (Mia Farrow) and the Clown (John Malkovich) and expresses another Allenesque variation on the impossibility of establishing a harmonious existence between men and women. In the atmosphere of the circus, the laws of reality can be suspended and the omnipotence of magic as a creative alternative to the sordidness of existence can be established. In *Shadows and Fog*, Allen opts for such a resolution deviating from the ending of "Death." In both texts, the serial killer turns out to be Death. In the early play Allen has Kleinman fall victim to it in the end, prefiguring to some degree Boris's fate in *Love and Death*. In the film, however, he finds a temporary solution to mortality and suffering through the art of magic. In the nick of time, Kleinman is saved from both Death and the vigilantes by the magician Omstedt (Kenneth Mars).

Shadows and Fogs as a pastiche is perhaps Allen's most ardent tribute to the cinema of German Expressionism. Technically, it employs the full arsenal of techniques typical of the UFA studio thrillers and the German "street films" of the 1920s: a manifest distortion of reality and emphasis on theatricality; the use of artificial *décor* and painted backdrops which replace the natural settings; the interplay of light and shadow for the creation of an atmosphere of horror and suspense through the manipulation of *Kammerspiele* (subjective camera) and *Stimmung* (mood); the specific spatial organization of the different lines and surfaces resulting in stylization and symbolically marked conjunctions of sharp angles, sloping verticals, and clashing planes evoking the absence of harmony in the irrational world of the subconscious. The *mise-en-scène* of Allen's film designed by Santo Loquasto — who "excelled himself, creating sets that were an anthology of alleys, staircases, nooks, crannies and doorways, with a few cluttered offices and rooming houses" (Baxter 389) — establishes directs intertextual links with F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Fritz Lang's *M* (1931). The grisly, fog-shrouded representation of the killer makes him into a composite villain based on Nosferatu, the Golem (*Der Golem*, 1920, dir. Paul Wegener and Carl Boese), Lang's child murderer, and G.W. Pabst's Jack the Ripper (*Die Büchse von Pandora*, 1928). The movement of the camera is subordinated to the aesthetic goals of the film in such a way that "it operates on its own wavelength" (Canby, Review) in order to recreate the ethereal mood of sheer terror and hysteria. The backlighting of the fog renders a highly unrealistic but poetic look that frames the entire cinematic text. In his discussion of the film, Fox sums up Allen's artistic appropriation of subject matter and poetics:

> The bare bones of the plot suggest a rather trite composite of several early European movie cycles. Woody's film, like those who inspired it, explores the darker side of human nature and, by inference, that of a specifically middle-European culture which, certainly during the period when the film is set, was, wrote historian Jeffrey Richards, "peculiarly obsessed with death, madness and twilight." The circus (or "carny") story, for instance, provided a perfect blend of the tawdry and the sinister while the classic serial killer plot, Fritz Lang's *M*, had used the role of the child murderer and his summary comeuppance at the hands of a criminally-inspired kangaroo court, as a cipher for the rise of Nazism. As in Lang's film, the motif of the "Citizens" committee as an alternative of the orthodox legal process demonstrates how anti-Semitism, vigilantism and hysteria may provide the seeds for extremist political acts. (222)

In the overall neurotic and irrational context of the world of German Expressionist cinema, the preference for Dostoevsky as a source of artistic inspiration is not accidental. The recurrent themes and motifs in Dostoevsky's works, such as the *Doppelgänger*, the psychotic states of the human subconscious, the incompatibility of the extraordinary individual and society, the prostitute theme, etc., coincide with the Expressionists' ideological pursuits. In 1918, Dimitri Buchowetzki and Carl Froelich adapted for the screen *The Brothers Karamazov*, with Emil Jannings and Werner Krauss playing the principal roles. Five years later, Wiene directed *Raskolnikow* based on another of Dostoevsky's masterpieces, *Crime and Punishment*. The film synthesizes Dostoevsky's unique artistic style and the technical accomplishments of German Expressionism. As Lotte Eisner points out, "this film contains certain shots in which sets and characters really seem to stem from Dostoevsky's universe and act upon each other through a sort of reciprocal hallucination" (27). The city landscapes and the interiors are presented in unnatural, distorted shapes against an artificial background with painted backdrops and a theatrical *décor*. Raskolnikov's deranged state of mind is visualized through uncanny angular forms and anomalous perspective: bent streetlights, polygonal windows with bizarre shapes, slanted walls, layers of reflected light, etc. Special attention is paid to the staircases and entrances. Each of these devices functions for the rendition of an overall hallucinatory atmosphere.

Thus, in *Shadows and Fog*, Allen incorporates a Dostoevskian layer that is justified on two levels: poetically, due to its connection with German Expressionism, and conceptually, by continuing Allen's implicit dialogism with the Russian writer. According to most critical readings of *Shadows and Fog*, the film's point of departure is the problem of the individual's loneliness in society which is symbolically represented by the street as a hostile, foreign space. With the increasing sense of alienation and ensuing terror that the character experiences in the course of the night, his surroundings become progressively foggier and murkier. Kleinman's increasing isolation is parallelled by his increasing sense of guilt — once again, for a crime that he has not committed, yet reinforced by the presence of a series of clues that seem to lead directly to him and convict him as the mysterious killer. The guilt motif mediated through the set of incriminating clues connects Kleinman to Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov. The intertextual echoes with *Crime and Punishment*, however, are more complex than a mere superficial similarity between the characters, especially since in most respects they are diametrically opposed: Kleinman is "Everyman," Raskolnikov is "Superman"; Kleinman is innocent though presumed guilty, Raskolnikov is guilty but presumed innocent; Kleinman is the embodiment of the Hebraic concept that "we are all guilty in the eyes of God," Raskolnikov, on the other hand, divides people into "ordinary men" who "have to live in submission, [and] have no right to transgress the law," and "extraordinary men" who "have a right to commit any crime and to transgress the law in any way, just because they are extraordinary" (*Crime and*

Punishment III: 5, 234). By this consistent juxtaposition on the level of the narrative, Allen prepares for the final ideological opposition of his views in comparison to Dostoevsky's.

In the end, Raskolnikov finds salvation through confession and by embracing the Christian faith. For Kleinman, however, there is no such alternative. His own religious affiliation remains ominously incomprehensible, as this becomes clear in the character's frustrated admission: "My people pray in a different language. For all I know, they were requesting their own troubles." Christianity as an alternative proves no better. While in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Mickey is only toying with the idea of embracing Catholicism to attain some structure in a meaningless universe without really being rejected by the institution, in *Shadows and Fog*, the Church becomes the primary and direct cause for Kleinman's persecution. This becomes unambiguously clear in the scene when Kleinman requests back half of the donation he has just made to the priest (Joseph Sommer) back. The money is Irmy's received as payment for having had sex with Jack (John Cusack). Feeling guilty, she decides to give it away as a way to expiate her sin. Later, however, she and Kleinman find a dejected woman with a baby on the street and Irmy decides to help them. As soon as Kleinman asks the priest for it, he has him listed in the policeman's sinister book of suspicious individuals.

Allen's message is clear: in his world religion has never possessed the mystical power for salvation and hope. In *Shadows and Fog*, he brings closure to his religious quest that to varying degrees is present in all of his films starting with *Love and Death*. In that film, the angel of God tricks him, but it is still a joyful death. In *Hannah and Her Sisters*, the search for meaning vacillates consecutively from Catholicism through Buddhism until the final realization that, *pace* Tolstoy, "the meaning of life is in life itself." In *Shadows and Fog*, the mood is sombre and bleak — no doubt a carry-over from the despair inherent in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* — and as indirectly supportive of the rising fascism, religion is completely demasked. What is even more discouraging is the fact that the only alternative for salvation presented is a non-realistic one: the power of magic.[2] In an interview about the film, Allen formulates this idea without the shadow of a doubt:

> ...So in a certain sense I lump the Jewish religion with all other religions as an organised religion and consequently baneful. I think all organised religions are not to the good of the human race. What could be more preposterous than taking a young boy and forcing him to go to a synagogue and pray to God in a language in which he has no idea what he ia saying? He could just as easily *be* calling down his own troubles, he could be saying anything.
>
> Each religion has its great list of preposterous notions and even worse than preposterous, even quite harmful.... If anything, all religions have demonstrated wasteful foolishess. They've earned scorn, not reverence. I'm not saying that a person cannot be personally religious and have real feelings, but as they are organised, that in itself is all the condemnation you need....
>
> (qtd. in Romney, "Shelter from the Storm" 9)[3]

In addition to the dispute over religion, additional Dostoevskian themes and motifs emerge in Allen's film. One such important theme that is recurrent in numerous works of both the Russian writer and the American director is the theme of the prostitute. In Dostoevsky, the presence of the prostitute is not only a necessary detail for a realistic depiction of a concrete social reality, but it is also a stable Biblical image of Mary Magdalene. For example, Liza from *Notes from Underground* shares features with Sonia from *Crime and Punishment* : both possess unshakeable faith that allows them to bear the worst humiliation and preserve their inner dignity and beauty. Ultimately, they become the vehicle for the protagonist's salvation. Even though Liza does not succeed in redeeming the Underground man, she is the one who comes closest to awakening in him the need "to fall down before her, to sob with remorse, to kiss her feet, to beg her forgiveness" (*Notes from Underground* 113). In *Crime and Punishment*, Sonia instigates the scenes of crisis when Raskolnikov finally admits his crime, takes responsibility for it, and makes the symbolic gesture of going to the crossroads (V: 4, VI: 7). Overriding the religious symbolism of Dostoevsky's plots and characterization strategies, Allen himself concurs with such a position and explains why he has such a fascination with prostitutes:

> Quite simply because they are tremendous people, very strong symbols of our society, a little like the Mafiosi and gangsters of Coppola or Spielberg. Dostoyevsky depicted them in his novels, Fellini in his films. They are the women who add colour to life but who are always considered, here, as less than nothing, destined to be punished by humiliation or death. (qtd. in Baxter 52)

In *Shadows and Fog*, some of the most life-affirming scenes take place at the whorehouse; in the macabre world of shadows and fog the prostitutes seem to be the only ones who, "although they sell 'love' also have the capacity to give it" (Fox 223). The prostitutes in the film establish an organic continuity with *The Purple Rose of Cairo* where Allen functionalizes their marginal position in society and places them on the margin between reality and illusion. In a way, Emma (Dianne Wiest) is the one who literally opens Tom Baxter's eyes as to what he is faced with, having chosen to leave the magic world of the screen. In *Mighty Aphrodite*, Allen provides his own rendition of a related favourite Russian theme: the salvation and redemption of the prostitute. Yet, Allen's prostitutes are not weak, impoverished, and passive creatures waiting to be rescued as a reward for their unshakeable faith. On the contrary, they have no illusions, usually they are economically independent, and they are able to maintain a sense of dignity that puts the male characters they come across at their mercy. This attitude is obvious especially in Allen's films of the 1990s when he abandons the format of the whorehouse and the hookers *en bloc* and actually includes them in his plotlines as individualized protagonists with a distinct voice: Sharon Grainger (Cristi Conaway) in *Husbands and Wives,* Linda Ash (Mira Sorvino) in *Mighty Aphrodite*, Cookie (Hazelle Goodman) in *Deconstructing Harry*.

In the context of the whorehouse, the character of Jack functions as a Dostoevskian double to Kleinman. Jack is the epitome of sensualism and a hedonistic appreciation of every moment of life with no concern either for the future or for the "bigger picture." In that sense, he is close to Dostoevsky's ambivalent villains, Svidrigailov (*Crime and Punishment*) and Rogozhin *(The Idiot*). The scene when Jack feverishly raises his bid for the possibility to spend a few moments of real passion with Irmy is reminiscent of a similar sequence of events in *The Idiot.* This is the scene at the apartment of Nastasya Filippovna where different characters try to buy her good will. Eventually, she opts for Rogozhin who in the course of events loses one hundred thousand roubles without batting an eye (I: 16). The frenetic impulses in Rogozhin's character consistently predominate over the rational materialistic concerns of Ganya Ivolgin, Nastasya's other suitor, and at the same time set up a stark contrast with the saintly demeanour of Prince Myshkin. In the same way, Jack's carefree attitude is necessary to highlight the tragic predicament of Kleinman: caused in part by a hostile environment and in part by his inability to situate himself into the *milieu* without sacrificing his own identity.

In *Shadows and Fog*, Allen poses the Dostoevskian question of free will which is a dominant theme of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. According to Lee, Kleinman is able to begin his redemption when he makes the choice of sacrificing his own safety in order to save Irmy. Eventually, his actions in good faith lead him to the magician who becomes his vehicle for salvation. Lee sees in this development of the plot a glimmer of optimism, an indication that "Allen has temporarily regained his optimism in the context of a fantasy" (308). While Lee successfully argues his position from a solid philosophical point of view, the pattern that can be established in Allen's existential quests seems to counter such an interpretation. There is a clear continuity in the director's resignation that structure can infuse sense into life. In *Alice*, Dr. Yang (Keye Luke) reiterates the claim of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor by telling the protagonist

(Mia Farrow) that "Freedom is a frightening thought." In *Mighty Aphrodite*, Allen returns to Greek mythology and the pre-monotheistic beliefs in inexorable fate as the only constant in a universe inhabited by numerous fickle, bickering, amoral gods. In *Deconstructing Harry*, he feels secure enough literally to descend to hell and, ironically, discover that things down there are not bad at all: "You know, I could be very comfortable here," admits Harry Block (Woody Allen) and with the Devil (Billy Crystal) drinks "to evil" as the force of negation that drives progress forward. The Devil himself is very human indeed: he is personified by Harry's friend Larry, and unlike the treacherous Angel of God, he does not cheat him. Finally, in *Celebrity*, the media are the new god that exerts power over all, regardless of religious, social, political, etc., affiliations.

In Allen's contemporary context of extreme relativism and semantic fluidity, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* holds a crucial place. In some respects this can be defined as a "crisis film," Allen's ultimate artistic articulation of the deep philosophical and moral issues that have concerned him as a creative personality. In his analysis of *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, Yacowar makes the following important statement: "With *Zelig*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* stands as a masterpiece in Allen's self-reflective cinema, as *Manhattan* and *Hannah and Her Sisters* are of his lyrical and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* of his ethical" (*Loser Takes All* 249). Among Allen's prose and films, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is the text that condenses with unparallelled sombreness his philosophical, moral, and artistic concerns. It is a quintessentially intertextual product anchored in cultural artefacts. The film is the culmination of Allen's mature dialogue with the Russian nineteenth-century realists whose relevance was already foreshadowed in the *War and Peace* parody, *Love and Death*. Yet, in the same way that *Love and Death* evokes a much broader cultural space than that of *War and Peace* which serves as the formal setting for the pastiche, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* represents a deeper inquiry into the existential, religious, and moral issues posed by Dostoevsky in his multi-volume *oeuvre* than simply Allen's twentieth-century relativist version of "crime without punishment." In this film, Allen integrates at least three of Dostoevsky's "great novels," specifically *Crime and Punishment, The Idiot,* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* follows simultaneously two independent plotlines — a dramatic and a comic one — which are brought together only in the last sequence of the film. The dramatic plotline tells the story of a well-respected ophthalmologist, Judah Rosenthal (Martin Landau). At first glance, he is a well-adjusted, happily married individual whose has exceeded as a professional and a public figure. The initial blissful scene celebrating Judah's success is intercut, however, with a flashback which undermines his apparent happiness and triggers off the action in the narrative. It becomes clear that for two years Judah has been cheating on his wife Miriam (Claire Bloom) with the flight attendant Dolores (Anjelica Huston). The film begins with the illicit affair in its critical stage: Judah wants to end it and return to his sheltered, well-ordered life with his dutiful wife. He accidentally finds a letter from Dolores to Miriam in which Dolores wishes to meet Miriam to resolve the troublesome situation. Judah's interception of the threat to his comfortable life results in a direct confrontation with Miriam and his realization that somehow their affair must end immediately. Miriam, however, refuses to give up her illusion of future happiness. In a moment of desperation she threatens Judah not only to expose his adulterous relationship but, worse, to destroy his reputation of social respectability by disclosing the fact that he has embezzled public funds. Dolores's second threat introduces the motif of money and corruption into the traditional love triangle conflict. Despite Judah's vehement protests that the money had been returned with interest, his initial image of an honest *paterfamilias* has been doubly marred: he is neither honest nor a true *paterfamilias*. Judah's discomfort increases with the realization that in effect Dolores is blackmailing him. He seeks for a way out.

Judah's moral dilemma is then consecutively presented to the two characters who can offer potential solutions for the protagonist. The first one is Rabbi Ben (Sam Waterston), a patient of the doctor who is progressively losing his sight. Ben is constructed as an ideal figure whose unshakable religious faith serves as the foundation of his deeds. He advises confession as the first step towards redemption. Judah, who realizes that he lives in "the real world" — a recurrent phrase throughout the film — ultimately rejects this option. His alternative is his brother Jack (Jerry Orbach), an ambiguous figure with connections to the underworld of crime. Jack is presented as Ben's antipode for whom "God is a luxury [he] can't afford." He does not offer hope, only practical solutions. He assures Judah that he can "take care" of the "problem." For a while Judah is left in limbo: unable to confess to Miriam, yet still not completely devoid of morality to agree to Jack's plan. Miriam's persistence at disrupting Judah's established upper middle-class existence, however, seals her fate. Judah makes his final decision against the background of violent thunder and lightning and an ominous fire that parallel his inner ethical struggle. The protagonist tries to justify his choice in an imagined dialogue with Ben — the last chance he has to save his soul.

Unlike the onstage violence seen in *Bullets Over Broadway*, the actual disposal of Dolores is only implied rather than visualized. The act itself is carried out off-stage. Only the result — the listless dead body in the claustrophobic apartment — appears in close-up. Judah's encounter with the dead Dolores triggers a sequence of childhood memories in which Judah's father, Sol (David S. Howard), echoes Judah's words at the beginning of the film when he explains that the idea that God sees all was indirectly responsible for his choice of profession. The idea of God's eyes becomes a dominant leitmotif in the film. The subsequent scene at the Rosenthals' household is presented as a fantasy sequence combining flashback and "time travel": the adult Judah imagines himself at his childhood house while the young Judah is also sitting at the dinner table. In fact, Judah *is* present in the house having acted on an impulse and gone back to his old neighbourhood. The scene he observes is an recollection of a Passover dinner where the whole family is gathered. In this short sequence a whole medley of voices and value systems emerge. Judah's Aunt May (Anna Berger) questions the legitimacy of the religious service, echoing Kleinman's distress at having to pray in language he does not understand. Sol's immediate response is to accuse her of being a "Leninist" — a comrade to the blasphemous Communist neighbours of *Radio Days* — and ends the discussion by the rigorous and uncompromising statement: "If necessary, I will always choose God over truth." The dinner table sequence, though technically part of the exposition, is one of the key scenes which determine the film's philosophical level. It is also one of the most Dostoevskian scenes in Allen's films where narrative and style are combined to render an ambiguously polyphonic crisis. In the end, after this brief guilt-ridden interlude and the failure of his father's dictum that "The eyes of God are on us always!" Judah does *not* get punished but instead regains his "peace" of mind and stability. His only confession aesthetic rather than ethical: he tells his "story" as a possible script for a film.

The comic plot follows scenes from the troubled life of Clifford Stern (Woody Allen): he is a failure as a serious film producer, his marriage is falling apart, his attempts to succeed in both through his relationship with the PBS TV-producer Halley Reed (Mia Farrow) are completely dashed when she chooses the successful Hollywood producer Lester (Alan Alda). Cliff is first introduced in the company of his niece, Jenny (Jenny Nichols), in effect the only female character that he has some success with; in some respects, as her mentor he is able to reenact yet another Pygmalion-Galatea type of relationship. His easy-going attitude with the girl is juxtaposed to the strained relations with his wife, Wendy (Joanna Gleason), who is not only dissatisfied with Cliff's activities but is removed from his system of values. She is responsible for getting Cliff the job of producing a documentary about her brother, Lester, a very successful and an utterly despicable TV producer who is the embodiment of everything Cliff despises in contemporary American culture. Ironically, Cliff's documentary is intended as part of a PBS series entitled "Creative Minds." In the course of the shooting of the film, Cliff meets Halley, falls in love with her, and even manages to get her interested in backing up a serious film about the philosopher Louis Levy (Martin Bergmann). Cliff constructs a truly insulting filmic representation of his brother-in-law: using the Kuleshov effect, he intercuts images of Lester with those of a donkey and Mussolini in order to suggest that he is hollow and autocratic and to arouse an emotive reaction in the audience. The only result he *does* achieve is to get himself fired and scorned by everyone. To top all of his miseries comes the news that his idol Louis Levy has committed suicide leaving a brief note — "I have gone out of the window." In the end, Cliff remains alone: without his wife, without the woman he loves, without the ideals that give meaning to his life. In a truly ironic reversal of our expectations, Halley also betrays him by agreeing to marry Lester.

The two plots are brought together by the character of Rabbi Ben who is Lester's brother and Judah's patient. The final sequence depicts the marriage ceremony of his daughter: an appropriate locus where all the characters converge. It is there that Allen offers his conclusive vision of utter pessimism that he develops in the course of the entire film: the rabbi has gone completely blind, Judah has not met with God's vengeance, Halley has sold herself to Lester, Levy is dead, Clifford has not attained anything in spite of his best intentions, the order of the *status quo* has been restored with no consequences for the culprits. As Yacowar observes, "Allen shows the sweeping failure of moral responsibility in our Godless age, both in petty misdemeanors and major crimes" (*Loser Takes All* 274). The only people who end up suffering are the "insulted and injured" by default: Dolores, Professor Levy, Rabbi Ben, Cliff. In the context of the visual narrative that the film presents, the "verbal" framing device of the voice-over by Louis Levy is nothing more than a caustic rejection of the closing words to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment:*

> But that is the beginning of a new story — the story of a gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life. That might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended. (Epilogue: 2, 492)

The appearance of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* caused a tremendous amount of intellectual and pseudo-intellectual response, as well as expected moral and pseudo-moral indignation. One of the most scathing attacks on the film came from *The New Republic* critic Leon Wieseltier.[4] Paradoxically, however, Stanley Kauffmann's review in the same publication praises it as Allen's "best and most courageous review." Wieseltier's indictment of the film is ingeniously devised to work on two levels: as a direct attack on a cultural artefact and as a propaganda lever to manipulate the consumers of this artefact. He *obliges* the viewers to reject the film because he did not like it:

> Let me be blunt: it is a matter of honor to hate this film. There is not a frame of it that fails to degrade, to debase and to demean something precious. It is the work of a consumer, a tourist, a peacock, a counterfeiter, a voyeur, a coward, a philistine, a creep. It is a stain upon the culture that produced it. I didn't like it.
>
> (43)

Clearly, Wieseltier's outrage only confirms the fact that Allen's film not only raises disturbing ethical issues, but, insofar as their treatment is concerned, the general mood is one unacceptable to the hegemonic ideology defining American society. His insulting accusations against the film, however, do have other proponents, as well, even if they present the issues on a less emotional level. Thus, in his recent biography, Baxter makes the claim that, "Crime in general, *even murder*, often gets sympathetic treatment in Allen's films" (16; emphasis added). He then goes on to lump together various Allen films, without taking into account generic constraints that usually determine the degree of verisimilitude. The "proof" that Allen's biographer provides to demonstrate the director's amoral "interest in criminality" (17) is based on examples from different films. The first reference is to the spoof documentary *Take the Money and Run*, which, according to Baxter, reflects Allen's early life so much that "it's almost surprising that Allen didn't turn to crime" (16). The author highlights the comical anchoring in which Danny's and Tina's flight from the hit men is grounded in *Broadway Danny Rose* without an explanation of the functional peculiarities of *skaz* as a highly unreliable form of narration. Then, he explains that in *Radio Days*, instead of killing Sally the gangster actually "pulls some strings" to get her a job at the radio station without even a suggestion of the content of Allen's voice-over explanation with respect to the incident. Baxter is disturbed by the fact that the neighbour-murderer in *Manhattan Murder Mystery* "is genial and never even remotely threatening" (16), but does not question the deeper implications of the situation. In *Bullets over Broadway*, he seems outraged that Cheech should have a "natural genius for stage" (16), in spite of the fact that he is a hit man and a thug, as if tightly compartmentalizing him according to a distinct and impermeable standard of features that define one's social and cultural positions. However, it is Baxter's reading of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* that seems to confirm the idea that emerges from the book in general that in addition to his gross dislike for Allen the person, he is completely at a loss in the creative universe of the Allen the artist:

> Even in his serious films, Allen gives sympathetic treatment to his worst transgressions. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* borrows *The Godfather's* acceptance that family values must be protected, by murder if necessary. Saintly ophthalmologist Judah Rosenthal turns to his gangster brother for help when a demanding mistress threatens their happy home. The brother helps out by having her killed, but only after a speech reminiscent of the opening scene of *The Godfather*, where Don Vito Corleone chides a petitioning undertaker for keeping him at arm's length until he has a favour to ask. (16-17)

The disturbing implications of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* resulted in a mini-forum on the pages of *The New York Times*. As Peter Steinfels, editor of the Arts section explains, the goal of the discussion was to "explore the moral and theological questions raised by the film"; the specialists on religious and broader cultural issues being James Nuechterlein, a Lutheran, Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz, and Mary Erler, professor of English. For Nuechterlein, Allen merely offers "the perspective of a man who wants to believe but cannot bring himself to do so — seemingly the prevailing plight among contemporary intellectuals." Erler finds the film's premise — "an apparently good man. led from wrong to deeper wrong, finds in the end that it doesn't matter at all" — to be "entirely schematic" and the treatment of the issues "swift, formal, shallow." Paradoxically, it is Borowitz who shows the most acute sense of understanding of the ideological level of the film and manages to display in his commentary the same kind of ambivalence that is inherent both in Allen's text and in the dominant values that define the various generations in our society. The disturbing conclusion is not that Allen has deprived society of a structure to provide meaning in our lives, but, rather, the fact that the younger representatives, "more than a generation removed from the film's central figures and trained at 'winning is the only thing,'" have become "too tough-minded, too cynical to expect justice or worry about its absence." In her review of the film, Janet Maslin also emphasizes this idea and traces a strong continuity of its treatment in the course of Allen's cinematic production:

> The note of ruefulness first sounded in *Manhattan*, with its sad acceptance of the idea that innocence is inevitably corrupted, has become predominant in Mr. Allen's work. Though his films often end, as this new one does, on an unexpectedly touching note of affirmation — variations on the "we need the eggs" endorsement of love that concludes *Annie Hall* — it's the cynicism that is most sharply and believably drawn.

In that sense, Allen *is* a moralist, and very much in the spirit of the Russian realists, he dons a messianic guise in an attempt, if not to save the world, to try to find a possible explanation for the evil that goes unpunished in it.

Allen's literary grounding in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* does not require much effort to prove. Naturally, the first name that come to mind with respect to the film is Dostoevsky. For instance, in his review of the film Richard Allen discusses the writer/director's attempts to create characters "called upon to embody a moral struggle of Dostoevskian magnitude" (45). In a number of other articles, there are additional references and parallels established with the Bible (Lee), Machiavelli (Minowitz), even Shakespeare (Quattrochi). In fact, for Quattrochi, compositionally, Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors* follows "classical and biblical models" with respect to structure, characters, and themes (90). The author discusses Allen's appropriation of the cultural artefacts of the Western tradition as functionally relevant for his "classical" narrative technique:

> Almost all great writers have imitated their predecessors. Virgil imitated Homer; Plautus and Terence imitated Menander; Dante imitated Virgil; Shakespeare imitated Holinshed and several others. In *Crimes and Misdemeanors* Allen imitates Shakespeare in the main plot and Plautus and Terrence in the subplot, but with an ironic reversal of the ending of each. (91)[5]

The ironic becomes the vehicle for the comic which in the film is affirmed on two levels. On the one hand, the comic subplot of Cliff's misdemeanors serves as a counterpoint to Judah's crime. On the other hand, the film's *dénouement* is that of a comedy in the strictest sense since it ends with a wedding. It can be argued that the notion of "ironic reversal" determines Allen's dialogue with Dostoevsky and underlies his strategies in reworking the primary literary material.

The title invites parallels between *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Crime and Punishment*. There is no doubt that common thematic and structural similarities can be established between the two works and there are possible character correspondences that enhance the kinship between them. However, placing Allen's film *only* within the paradigm of *Crime and Punishment* would fail to demonstrate a more complex network of philosophical and existential concerns that can be traced between these two original artists. My discussion below will present the dominant views as to the intertextual dimension that exists between Allen and Dostoevsky and then will enhance it with additional relevant issues that emerge from other of Dostoevsky's novels and their interconnection with the film.

Peter Minowitz contextualizes *Crimes and Misdemeanors* in the framework of the production of two literary figures: Dostoevsky and Machiavelli. In his article "Crimes and Controversies: Nihilism from Machiavelli to Woody Allen," he claims that "Allen and Dostoyevsky both depict men who break with their religious upbringings and end up murderers" (80); however, "Allen's bold flirtation with immortality and irreligion resembles not Dostoyevsky but Machiavelli" (81). According to Minowitz, the major difference between the Russian writer and the American director is that in the end, Allen remains much more ambiguous in his treatment of nihilism. Thus, while Dostoevsky's murderers are punished for their crimes in society and at the same time through confession and repentance attain a higher level of religious illumination, often aided "in large part by the love of a woman of unshakeable religious faith" (80), Judah "plunges briefly into guilt, despair, and alcohol abuse, he resurfaces — experiencing denial and rationalization rather than expiation and renewal — to what might seem to be a perfectly satisfying life" (81). The inversion that governs the correspondences between Raskolnikov and Judah is sustained on the level of some of the other characters, as well. Minovitz considers the progressively blind Rabbi Ben to be the American embodiment of Porfiry. Following the same logic, Jack Rosenthal is likened to Svidrigailov; yet, Jack seems to remain unbothered by any pangs of conscience while Svidrigailov is at least partially redeemed when he commits suicide and takes responsibility for the depravity in his life. However, the end of the film reintroduces "a new mood of sentimentality and hopefulness" and "the 'presence of God' is invoked more palpably here than elsewhere in the film" (88). While it is arguable if the final dance of the blind rabbi and the omniscient voice of the dead Levy do ultimately leave the spectator with such an optimistic mood, the tension between old and new, sentimentalism and realism, hope and despair, remains in the film. In some respects, Allen parallels Dostoevsky's oscillation between romanticism and realism. In fact, this tendency reappears and is given alternative resolutions in the films immediately following *Crimes and Misdemeanors*: in *Alice* and *Shadows and Fog*, the romantic side of Allen seems to take the upper hand; in *Husbands and Wives*, the director gives in to the romanticism in a brief scene later recollected in tranquillity, but eventually opts for the realism of life.

In his article "Die New Yorker Variante: Eine intertextuelle Lektüre von Dostoevskijs Roman *Schuld und Schühne* und Woody Allens Film *Verbrechen und andere Kleinigkeiten*," Christoph Velhues provides a close intertextual reading of *Crime and Punishment* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. In his theoretical framework, the author takes in consideration not only the content changes that Allen introduces, but also the necessary formal reconfigurations that the transposition from one medium into another requires. Thus, Velhues differentiates between "Intertextualität," meaning "intertextuality" in the narrow sense of the word, and "Intermedialität," meaning a cinematic transposition of a literary text. This transposition can be either simple or complex. In the case of a simple transposition. the director strictly observes the formal parameters given by the literary text of reference. The aim is for the film to remain as "faithful" as possible to the novel. In the case of a complex transposition, the situation changes considerably. The cinematic text undergoes sufficient formal and content distancing and thus cannot be considered an adaptation of the literary text. At the same time, however, in its deep structures both texts have similar ideological objectives. To illustrate the distinction between these two types of text relations, the author juxtaposes Allen's film to Lev Kulidzhanov's faithful adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel.

The intertextual links that Velhues establishes on the level of characterization are as follows. The connection between Judah and Raskolnikov is based on their common role as murderer while Dolores is identified with Alyona in their common fate as victims. At the same time, an inversion in their external characteristics is also established along several axes: old/young, sexually appealing/repulsive, exploited/exploiter, professionally unfulfilled/successful businesswoman. Due to these differences, in some ways Dolores is also the embodiment of the other, accidental, victim, Lizaveta. In the novel, Raskolnikov loathes Alyona but feels compassion for Lizaveta. In the film, Judah experiences a simultaneous feeling of love and hate towards Dolores. Rabbi Ben shares some traits with Sonia, especially in his proposition for a "secular" solution to Judah's problem: his confession of the adultery to Miriam and the hope that she would be understanding with respect to his transgression. The shrewd investigator in *Crime and Punishment*, Porfiry Petrovich finds his counterpart in the much less committed Mike O'Donnell (Victor Argo) in the film. The detective appears very briefly in one scene and takes the words of the respected ophalmologist for granted. Velhues finds the other corresponding characters in the comic subplot. Lester is seen as a Luzhin of the Reagan-Bush decade, Halley is reminiscent of Dounia, while Cliff's idol Louis Levy is treated as a contemporary representation of Raskolnikov's alter ego, Svidrigailov.

In the New York *dénouement* of the conflict, Ben's daughter's wedding serves as the public scene for confession. According to Velhues, Allen's resolution should be seen as a pessimistic counteralternative to Dostoevsky's belief in the future regeneration of Raskolnikov as an individual with renewed morality and Christian faith who is able to attain this higher state through his suffering and repentence. In Allen's film, the ending is a kind of an "apotheosis" for Lester, who gains not only the adulation and respect of everyone, but in addition, wins Halley's love. The conversation between Judah and Cliff in essence poses the question inherent in *Crime and Punishment* of how the respective protagonist will go on living with his guilt. The two texts offer distinctly divergent answers. In the end, Raskolnikov accepts his suffering and is able to free himself of the guilt. Judah, on the other hand, manages to avoid a public confession, and suffers secretly waiting for God's vengeance, until one day, he realizes that the crisis is over. There is no punishment, only occasional pangs of conscience, and even they fade with time. As Velhues points out, "Der Mord (*crime*) gerät zur Unartigkeit (*misdemeanor*), die im Filmtitel die *punishment/наказание*-Komponente des Intertextes ersetzt" ("The crime becomes a misdemeanour which replaces the component of *punishment* in the film's title") (305; translation is mine).

Velhues's reading of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* in the context of *Crime and Punishment* identifies the mechanisms through which the primary literary text is transformed into its indirect cinematic version and the parallels that emerge between characters and events. What is missing from the analysis, however, is the author's explanation why Allen bothers to enter into this intertextual dialogue. Apart from *Crime and Punishment*, none of the other novels by Dostoevsky is alluded to and there is no ideological dimension to the discussion that emerges as a natural expectation after the claim of Allen's utter pessimism and lack of faith in the essential goodness of humankind. In fact, through the title and the content Allen's film not only indirectly evokes other works by Dostoevsky, poses philosophical and existential questions that cannot be give simple, one-dimensional answers, invites for a religious dimension based on the opposition Christianity-Judaism which in the course of the narrative is subtly obliterated, but it also establishes an aesthetic tension between romanticism and realism as artistic perspectives. The clash between these two distinct sensibilities define both Dostoevsky's and Allen's creative production and are gradually resolved in it. For Dostoevsky, one such conclusive work is *The Idiot*; for Allen, his film, *Husbands and Wives*.

As Eric Lax explains, Allen underwent much "soul-searching" as far as the title of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is concerned. He classifies the possible titles into four categories that are quite indicative of the existential orientation of the work: "Good and Evil," "Hope," "Eyesight group," "Choice." The distribution is as follows:

Good and Evil
"Acts of Good and Evil"
"Moments of Good and Evil"
"Scenes of Good and Evil"

Hope
"Glimmer of Hope"
"Hope and Darkness"
"Faint Hope"

Eyesight group
"The Eyes of God"
"Windows of the Soul"
"Visions of the Soul"
"Dark Vision"
"The Sight of God"

Choice
"A Matter of Choice"
"Choices in the Dark"
"Decisive Points"

(see Lax 367)

The result is *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, in other words, an emphasis on the Dostoevskian intertext. Lax's list, however, stresses seeing as a central metaphor that defines the film. All the characters in the two subplots either wear glasses or do not — a physical peculiarity which is correlated to their system of values and ethical make-up. Similarly, Dianne Vipond's discussion of the film bears the subtitle "A Retake on the Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg." As Lee points out,

> The theme of vision is emphasized by the fact that four of the major characters (Cliff, Ben, Halley, and Luis Levy) wear glasses, while Judah (not in need of vision correction himself) is an ophthalmologist.... The four characters mentioned above are the ones who seem most open to Levy's description of the obligations incumbent upon those who choose to follow God, yet they are all shown as suffering from impaired vision, and perhaps the most saintly of them, Ben, is in the process of going blind. This suggests that those of us who retain an interest in God and morality have simply failed to see that such concerns have lost their relevance in these corrupt times. (274-75)

The notion of seeing as a divine attribute is introduced in the early sequences of the film where Judah is being celebrated for his "philanthropic efforts," but also as an exceptional "husband, father, golf companion." This early presentation of the protagonists builds him up as a real "Renaissance man" (Lee 256), a person who gives advice on music, knows which restaurant to go to in Paris, or — notably — which hotel to book in Moscow. This larger-than-life representation that the verbal narrative constructs is immediately shattered by a visual flashback that subverts the perfect image. Earlier that day, Judah is seen intercepting a letter from his lover Dolores addressed to his wife. Similar to the letter that Raskolnikov receives from his mother that his sister, Dounia, has promised to marry Luzhin as the ultimate sacrifice for the well-being of her brother which becomes the underlying motivation for the murder in the novel, Dolores's letter becomes the formal trigger for the future actions in the film. The utter amorality of Judah's later choices are juxtaposed to his speech before those who have gathered to honour his public persona:

> Judah: That the new ophthalmology wing has become a reality is not just a tribute to me, but to a spirit of community, generosity, mutual caring, and answered prayers. Now, it's funny I use the term "answered prayers" — you see, I'm a man of science, I've always been a sceptic, but I was raised quite religiously, and while I challenged it, even as a child, some of that feeling must have stuck with me. I remember my father telling me, "The eyes of God are on us always!" The eyes of God! What a phrase to a young boy! And what were the eyes of God like? Unimaginatively penetrating and intense eyes, I assumed. And I wonder if it was just a coincidence that I made my specialty ophthalmology?
>
> (transcript from the videofilm)

In this first self-qualification of the protagonist, he portrays himself as less of a Raskolnikov figure with his ideas of grandeur and exclusivity than as a member of the community, as one of the many. Yet, what distinguishes him from the rest is the fact that he is a "sceptic." All these external and internal details essentially distance him from the Napoleonic nature of the protagonist-murderer in *Crime and Punishment* while bringing him much closer to the mysterious and economically prosperous Svidrigailov, the one character who is truly human in the full range that the term encompasses. Like Svidrigailov, Judah is beyond a simplistic distinction between good and evil and seems "to elude rectilinear evaluation as 'bad'" (Jackson, "Introduction" 5). At the same time, Judah's skepticism positions him in a relation of kinship to another important Dostoevsky character, Ivan Karamazov, and thus actualizes the film's intertextual dialogue with *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The connection is not so far-fetched if we take into account the fact that another of the provisionary titles for the film was "Brothers," "Woody's own favourite of over 20 titles he had previously considered" (Fox 202). In many respects, *Crimes and Misdemeanors* depicts various relations between brothers: Judah and Jack; Lester and Cliff who are, formally speaking, brothers-in-law; Lester and Ben; finally, there is a symbolic relation of brotherhood established between Judah and Ben. Each of these brothers finds a correlation with the characters in Dostoevsky's novel. Thus, Jack's overall demeanour places him close to the sensual Dmitri, while Ben represents the saintly Alyosha. Judah with his skepticism and scientific frame of mind corresponds to Ivan, the intellectual brother of the Karamazovs. Like Ivan, Judah is educated and aloof, with a distinctly rationalist point of view which places him in a more detached position than either the direct physicality of Jack or the unquestioned spirituality of Ben. In succumbing to the affair with Dolores, Judah also expresses the quintessential duality that defines Ivan's character: "I have a longing for life, and I go on living in spite of logic."

In Dostoevsky's novel, Ivan is indirectly responsible for Smerdyakov's violent murder of their father. In Allen's film, Judah plays a similar role of the manipulator when he turns to Jack "for help." Jack, who combines the features of Dmitri and the bastard brother Smerdyakov, asks him several times, "What do you want me to do, Judah?" Living in the real world, he undertakes upon himself to handle the problem with Dolores and commissions a "small burglary" which in the end is attributed to a drifter "who has a number of other murders to his credit — so ... what the hell, one more doesn't even matter" (transcript from the videofilm). None of the brothers even faces the slightest suspicion. Alyosha's counterpart, Ben, retains his faith in the face of all adversity, and even though he is absolutely blind by the end of the film, he is the only happy one having chosen "God over Truth."

In addition to the possible correlations that can be established between characters in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, the dialogue between the two texts raises on the level of thematics with the introduction of the implications of faith in human life and the concept of free will. In one of the pivotal scenes of the film, Judah's fantasy sequence when returning to the house of his childhood, Allen essentially renders his own transposition of the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor (II: 6: ii) in the context of his own chronotope. Ivan's Grand Inquisitor appears in the form of Aunt May who dares to question and subverts Sol's unshakable belief in the omnipotence of his God by invoking a direct reference to the most horrendous crime against the Jewish people, the Holocaust. Her example is the modern-day counterpart of Ivan's own shattered ideas about harmony and justice in real life exemplified in the suffering of young children. Aunt May's argument also parallels Dmitry's discussion with Alyosha where he concludes that God has set nothing but riddles (I: 3: iii). She is joined in her scepticism by the adult Judah whose gesture translates to symbolic parricide. Having commissioned Dolores's murder and not paid for it apart from a temporary period of guilt-ridden, sleepless nights, he is finally able to kill Sol, if not literally, then ideologically.

While Dostoevsky ultimately opts for a leap of faith over free will, Allen seems to side with the position of the Grand Inquisitor. In *Alice*, the mysterious Dr. Yang (Keye Luke) utters words that seem to have been taken directly from the lips Ivan Karamazov's sinister creation: "Freedom is a frightening thought."

Nonetheless, Alice's choice is similar to Alyosha's: she leaves her sheltered, bourgeois life behind on "a quest for a higher power" (Fox 219), symbolically, but not visually, represented by her trip to India in order to work with Mother Theresa, the Catholic counterpart of Father Zosima. Her miraculous "transformation" *à la* a Dostoevskian character receives an overtly ironic treatment: the camera does not follow her along the path of her new life, only an extra-diegetic voice-over quickly fills up the missing footage. The last shots of Alice, however, contextualize her in the known spaces of Central Park, presumably a new woman ready to cope on her own with her children and her life. Allen's "first 'New-Age' comedy" (Fox 213) thematizes the loss of innocence and illusions, but not necessarily their recuperation. As Fox points out, "the journey into the fantastic suggests that present, past, and future may in effect be indistinguishable" (210). Within Dostoevsky's ideological framework, Allen's position emerges as an opposing one, not only questioning but refusing to accept the possibility of linear progression and settling for chaotic randomness or, at best, tedious cyclicity.

In that sense, Dostoevsky as a presence in Allen's *oeuvre* has an ambivalent value. While Allen recognizes the intellectual power of his vision, he does not adopt it in a straight-forward manner, but rather chooses to undermine its implications while at the same time retaining the aesthetic dimension following the Russian cultural paradigm. Thus, for instance, according to Malcolm Jones,

> A devil ... appears to Ivan in hallucinatory form. He is a peculiarly modern devil, not only in dress and attitude, but in sheer ordinariness. Psychologically, he represents the commonplace in Ivan himself, what critics of Russian literature are wont to refer as *poshlost'* (self-satisfied mediocrity). (173)

While Allen takes an opposite view of Aunt May's lack of faith, he, nevertheless, introduces the idea of *poshlost'* by means of a subtle reference to

Chekhov in the comic subplot of the film. In a scene where Lester is trying to win Halley over romantically, he praises her plan to produce a different Chekhov story every month.

The subplot of *Crimes and Misdemeanors* actualizes yet another layer of Dostoevsky's prose. The love triangle Lester, Halley, and Clifford can be seen as a contemporary variation of the intensely charged and ultimately destructive affair of Nastasya Filippovna with the two protagonists and doubles in *The Idiot*, Myshkin and Rogozhin. While far from possessing the saintly goodness of the prince,[6] Clifford's character is the one that at least embraces with candour a set of values and tries to live by them. When each one of them is consistently shattered, the only possible closure he can offer is a collage of earlier life-affirming humanistic maxims, ironically pronounced with conviction by his dead idol. His kinship to Myshkin is also strengthened in the scenes where he is seen with his niece of whom he is genuinely fond and determnined to pass on knowledge and education that transcend conventional social rituals. At the same time, there is an implicit connection between him and his brother-in-law, his successful and not necessarily utterly empty-headed alter ego, Lester. Like Rogozhin, Lester possesses a level of corporeality and connection to life that gives justification to his at first glance superficial actions.

As in *The Idiot*, where the theme of money pervades the whole work, money becomes a plot-motivating force in the film. Moreover, Dolores's death resembles more closely Nastasya Filippovna's murder by Rogozhin than Raskolnikov's crime. The two women share a number of characteristics both in terms of outer appearance with their dark looks and in their inner emotional outbursts verging on hysteria. Their presence creates a frenetic atmosphere where a strong romantic component is introduced. In both texts, this is a different kind of romanticism that blends in with the stark realism that pervades them. The effect is a form of "romantic realism," a concept coined by Donald Fanger to define Dostoevsky's particular brand of mood evoked in his prose.

Allen's *Husbands and Wives* presents a further cinematic rendition of this mood. The cross-cultural dimension of the film is rooted in Russian literature through the direct mentioning of Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. Each of them is defined by Gabe (Woody Allen), notably using the traditional Allen food imagery. In that gradation, Dostoevsky is ranked the highest. This assessment then receives a visual rendition in the brief scene where the romantic mood of a sudden electric power outage induces Gabe into acting out the dramatic ambiance of the situation and kiss Rain (Juliette Lewis). Moreover, throughout the film, there are numerous parlour scenes reminiscent of Nastasya Filippovna's notorious *soirées* where freneticism dominates. In fact, this is one of the first Allen films where obscenities abound in the dialogue and Jack (Sydney Pollack) physically abuses his girlfriend Sam (Lysette Anthony), frustrated by her utter inability to become his obedient Galatea.

Donald Fanger identifies the emergence of romantic realism in the first half of the nineteenth century as a reaction against Romantic poetics and philosophy (3-27). What singles out the real artist from the members of the group is the artist's capacity to overcome the domain of collective postulates and interests in favour of a personal, unique creative method. The defining feature of romantic realism is the extremely subjective view of life experiences and the world in general. This subjectivity is manifest in a twofold manner with Dostoevsky, especially in his mature works. On the level of the authorial persona, he achieves this by refusing to be incorporated in any literary movements or circles. On the level of the world represented in his works, he expresses his adherence to romantic realism by the introduction of exceptional, bigger-than-life individuals as protagonists. In this respect, *The Idiot* is an extremely appropriate example. Prince Myshkin is undoubtedly a Messianic Christ figure. Yet, on another level, he is simultaneously the outstanding Romantic hero with his high aspirations and noble ideals who, however, remains inscrutable for the crowd and often is perceived at best as a holy fool. The same is applicable to Allen's characters. As a rule, they are conceived as outsiders, who consistently strive to preserve their values. Gabe may be a successful writer and a respected professor at Columbia but he, nevertheless, remains misunderstood and implicitly marginalized. It is not accidental that at the end of *Husbands and Wives*, Gabe is the only one who remains alone and unfulfilled.

Fanger points out that romantic realism reveals a parallel adaptation of comic techniques, largely through the employment of the grotesque (115-26). In this approach it differs greatly from late nineteenth-century realism which makes extensive use of irony. It is worth mentioning that while in his other novels Dostoevsky opts for a more ironic representation, in *The Idiot*, he remains intentionally faithful to the grotesque. For instance, in *Crime and Punishment* he manifests an overall ironic attitude towards Razumikhin. In turn, this global ironic figure refers us back to some similar aspects of the protagonist, e.g., the emphasis on Raskolnikov's famous Zimmermann hat. In the same way, the grotesque clown Ferdyshchenko by his very presence and behaviour highlights some grotesque — yet devoid of irony — features in Myshkin, for instance, the permanent stress on his *iurodivost'* (the quality of being a "holy fool"), but not *shutovstvo*, (being a "clown"). The same distinction is valid if we compare the "doubles" Cliff-Lester in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* or Gabe-Sam in *Husbands and Wives*.

Another aspect of romantic realism that Fanger finds is valid for Dostoevsky is the incorporation of myth as a romantic streak within the realistic narrative. Being an anti-historicist, Dostoevsky, who "demands less effort of the historical imagination" (Fanger 130), considers myths as a part of reality, but lacking the historical determinism and naturalistic interpretation. In this framework, Rosemary Jackson considers Dostoevsky as one of the votaries of the cult of romantic intensity, "who does not portray the world of nineteenth century reality; [but] reveals the myths upon which that reality is founded" (47). In this framework, Allen's entire *oeuvre* can be seen as an extended exploration into the mythology of the New Yorker, in all its noble and ignoble aspects. And while the social space he analyzes may be a more limited one, the existential implications possess a power that transcends this limited scope.

In the context of romantic realism, specific attention should be paid to the significance of St. Petersburg. On one level its depiction is graphically concrete and realistically faithful. At the same time, on another level, Dostoevsky, in his treatment of the city, can be defined as a follower of Pushkin and Gogol who began the mythical tradition with regards to St. Petersburg. According to Fanger:

> [Dostoevsky's] Petersburg has at least as much strangeness about it as the Paris of Balzac, the London of Dickens, or the earlier Petersburg of Gogol; and the real city he wrote about is, moreover, even remoter from our own historical experience.... Petersburg is established as the most real of places in order that we may wonder at what strange things happen in it: it is, in fact, the condition of our perceiving the full force of strangeness, the lever that forces the suspension of our disbelief. But once our wonder has been stimulated, the city itself becomes its object, and all that seemed most real a moment before may at any time begin to appear the sheerest fantasy. The dialectic process is the Dostoevskian hallmark: he himself called his method "fantastic realism."
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> (129, 134)

The same formula can be applied to the evocation of New York in any Allen film. It has been pointed out time and again that Allen's artistic dialogue with the world is anchored in one very particular space: New York. On his own, in the course of more than thirty years, he has been in the process of constructing his unique New York chronotope, in Bakhtin's terminology. In fact, it may be argued, that the New York chronotope, with its undercurrent implications and connotations, is one of Allen's most important contributions both on the level of poetics and ideology. Furthermore, unlike Bakhtin's stable paradigm, Allen's chronotope is post-modernly fluid: shifting from the mythological grandeur in *Manhattan* to the realistically anchored celebration in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, to the dark angst in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and the ironically detached mockery in *Celebrity*. Perhaps an appropriate designation for it would be Woody Allen's Manhattan chronotope.[7] Just like Gogol's and Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, or Pushkin's and Tolstoy's

Moscow, Allen's Manhattan acquires the status of character in his films and as such is the bearer of values, transcending its technical narratological function. In effect, space in Allen's films functions as a visual marker of his aesthetic and ethical concerns. The validity of the Manhattan chronotope and its extratextual, independent existence can be verified in productions such as Rob Reiner's/Nora Ephron's homage to Allen *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), the *Late Night with David Letterman* talk show, and Allen-indebted sitcoms like *Seinfeld* and *The Single Guy*.

Casting his focus on reality through the prism of the romantic, Dostoevsky discovers the strange in the familiar, the subjective in the objective, the melodramatic in the monotonous everyday routine, and sustains a precarious balance on the threshold between the one and the other. In his novels, one feels the perpetual stressed tension between the ideal and the real. It is this violent oscillation which can be defined as the base component of Dostoevsky's grammar of human behaviour. In Allen, the tension translates into a neurotic refusal to accept social convention and expectations, a recurrent look at alternative possible worlds through dreams and magic, and a forceful recognition that art remains the only realistically possible vehicle to escape uniformity.

It is clear that Allen's relationship to Dostoevsky is a complex and ambivalent one. Several levels of dialogism can be established. Allen's familiarity with the Russian writer allows him to take his plots and appropriate them within his own artistic world. Technically, he uses a variety of strategies such as direct quotations, parodic transmutations, pastiche, and thematic and chronotopic transformations in order to achieve his cinematic vision. One of the underlying implications for such an approach is to hybridize his own products belonging to the domain of popular culture and elevate their ideological significance. For Allen, Dostoevsky appears to be the vehicle to achieve his intellectual goal. Having embraced Tolstoy's defiant joy of life and Chekhov's subdued poetics, he turns to Dostoevsky whenever he has to deal with the ultimate philosophical issues of morality.

NOTES

[1] It is worth mentioning in passing that the invocation of Rilke in *Another Woman* and *Husbands and Wives* indirectly actualizes a Russian connection since Rilke's outlook was heavily influenced by the spirituality of Tolstoy.

[2] It should be noted that while in an early play such as "Don't Drink the Water," for instance, religion and magic are not seen as opposites but perhaps even complementary activities, hence Father Dobney's hobby as an amateur magician, in *Shadows and Fog*, magic is an act of free human creativity that can possibly counteract the stifling doctrines and fascistic practices of institutionalized religion.

[3] This position is fundamental in Allen's creative paradigm. In his early film, *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex**, he has an extremely irreverent episode depicting a rabbi being whipped and admitting that his most sacred fantasy is to be eating pork. He was severely criticized by several religious organizations. Allen's response to the criticism is documented in the Probst interview: "The B'nai B'rith complained about whipping the rabbi in *Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex*. I've never considered rabbis sacred as I've never considered any organized religion sacred. I find them all silly. Costumed and bearded just like popes, to me it's absolutely silly" (261).

[4] A possible revenge on Allen's part appears in the later *Everyone Says I Love You*: the magazine becomes the overt marker for one of the characters' right wing orientation — a temporary condition of insanity which in the end is resolved through minor surgery.

[5] It is not my intention here to argue with Quattriochi on the criteria defining a "great writer." However, his stimulating discussion of the main plot in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* in the context of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and in part *King Lear*, and the film's subplot in the context of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Greek New Comedy, makes a persuasive case for discussing Allen's later films

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as tightly constructed "classical" narratives despite their twentieth-century modernist sensibility. Similarly, Bordwell and Thompson analyze Allen's 1986 *Hannah and Her Sisters* as a sample of "classical narrative cinema" (376-81). And in his review, Richard Allen states: "The parallel comic and dramatic plots are both superbly crafted at the formal and thematic level, demonstrating again that Allen is a master of classical screen direction" (44).

[6] While Myshkin is usually treated as Dostoevsky's human embodiment of Christ, it is worth mentioning Robert Lord's thesis that "Myshkin's charm and otherworldliness are fraught with cunning and ambiguity" (81). In that sense, a parallel with Cliff who manifests certain manipulative traits is no longer so far-fetched.

[7] I find this an appropriate term since with the notion of chronotope Bakhtin practically pushes the visual potential of the verbal medium to its limit. In this sense, the chronotope can be a useful parameter in film analysis.

CONCLUSION

The Anxiety of Influence or a Celebration of Culture

> What is there to say about Chaplin as a farceur? Biographies, reviews, retrospective critiques, and put-downs in more than a dozen languages have taken stock of his writing, directing, acting, public and private personalities, working habits, home life, sexual proclivities, and the probable dynamics of his unconscious, occasionally weaving them together for the sake of a rounded view.
>
> (Albert Bermel, *Notes on Farce* 167)

Any discussion of either intertextuality or thematics inevitably actualizes the adjacent concept of "influence." Besides being a major cause of anxiety in the context of current literary studies and cultural criticism, as Harold Bloom indicates, as a theoretical construct it "remains the most tenacious critical metaphor in the pedagogy and theory of literature today" (Morgan 2). Film studies as a discipline is less "traumatized" by influences since it perceives them as a means of simultaneously paying homage to the past and a subtle commentary on the post-modern present, often seen as a state of unceasing *récyclage*. One way or another, there is no escape from the pervasiveness of intertext and thematic borrowing. Essentially, influence positions two disparate domains in a relation of equivalence. This axiomatic situation, however, establishes a hierarchically valorized network in which the earlier Text 1 as a model is usually considered to be the "better" one, while the later Text 2 is assessed insofar as it achieves a more or less successful commentary on the former. Morgan explains the reason for this somewhat restricted and restrictive understanding: influence is apprehended to be

> a unidirectional "current" or relationship between an anterior text and a posterior text. Text A influences text B when the critic can demonstrate

> that B has "borrowed" structure(s), theme(s), and/or image(s) from A or the "lender." Besides placing the burden of debt entirely on the more recent text, this model also valorizes text A more highly because it is the ur-text or *source* of certain features in text B. (Morgan 2).

With regards to my discussion, the above claim means that the "Russian layer" implicitly gains superior status over the "Woody Allen layer." Clearly, such an understanding of "influence" — unidirectional and hierarchically determined — limits any comparative investigation. It is not my aim to establish a vertical scale on which Allen's works are positioned below those of the Russian nineteenth-century writers. In fact, in the context of cross cultures and various artistic media it will be difficult even to attempt a similar taxonomization.

On the other hand, it is possible to approach these two cultural domains comparatively, and to establish intersecting cultural planes from a different perspective. Adopting a more relativistic perspective, one that takes into account the ludic mode of post-modern creative activity, we can eventually expand the notion of "influence," overcoming the anxiety in favour of the *bricolage*. In that sense, it would be possible to assess not only how Allen, for instance, interprets — artistically and ideologically — Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but also the reverse process: namely, how our perception of *War and Peace* or Tolstoy has been affected once we have been exposed to Allen's parody *Love and Death*. The issue of the bidirectionality of influence is already humorously treated in David Lodge's *Small World* (1984), a sequel to his earlier *Changing Places* (1975), in which the author's attention has shifted from the Structuralism of the 1960s to the "Post"-period of the 1980s. There, one of the protagonists, Persse McGariggle, claims that his MA topic is about "the influences of T.S. Eliot on Shakespeare" (51) He goes on to explain that contemporary readers of these authors are inevitably affected in their understanding of Shakespeare by Eliot's interpretations, intertextual borrowings, and, ultimately, the latter's authoritative influence with regards to the understanding of the former: "what I try to show is that we can't avoid reading Shakespeare through the lens of T.S. Eliot's poetry. I mean, who can read *Hamlet* today without thinking of 'Prufrock'? Who can hear the speeches of Ferdinand in *The Tempest* without being reminded of 'The Fire Sermon' section of *The Waste Land*?" (52). It turns out that this *ad hoc* argumentation is meant solely to spite one of Persse's obnoxious colleagues. Yet, his argument is immediately validated on two levels: firstly, by his more widely-read, *au courant* American colleague and love interest, A.L. Pabst; and secondly, and more importantly by Felix Skinner, a representative of an academic publishing house. Skinner readily offers Persse a possible contract to have his MA published as a book with the explanation that "the libraries will buy almost anything on either Shakespeare or T.S. Eliot. Having them both in the same title would be more or less irresistible" (52). As an aside, it is worth remarking that Lodge's three campus novels (the third one being his 1988 *Nice Work*) capture the academic trends in the humanities in the course of several decades with unparallelled precision and humour.

Within this framework, the importance of the addressees, readers and spectators, is also foregrounded. Moreover, the addressees' cultural identities become a crucial factor that will determine their perceptions of the intertextual links. Without claiming absolute validity of this postulate, it is viable to accept the premise that there is a correlation between a given spectator's viewing of Allen's films and his/her familiarity with Russian literature, cinema, and philosophical thought. Thus, for example, many movie buffs recognize the Eisensteinian reference of the two lions that Allen humorously incorporates in his early *Bananas*. For most spectators who recognize the reference, it is just that: a quotation, an homage. It is quite likely, however, that a smaller group of film theory aficionados will go beyond the surface structure and attempt to establish a deep-structure account for the use of Eisensteinian montage in Allen's comedy. They will be reminded that Eisenstein's conception of montage is oriented towards the mass audience. Inspired by the revolution, the director wants to convince and manipulate the masses; hence, the means of achieving the emotive effect of a sequences is by montagic intercutting. In this context, which is based on the actualized original function of montage as conceived by Eisenstein, the interpretation of Allen's implementation can follow a more sophisticated logic. Firstly, Allen's audience is more exclusive, more "cultured," hence, it is elite, likely to recognize his "cinematic name-dropping." Secondly, it is possible that his use of the Eisensteinian technique with respect to this more sophisticated audience reveals his wish to manipulate the masses. If we examine the thematic nodes of *Bananas*, two of the dominant themes that emerge are Allen's satirical view on the revolution *à la* Trotsky and the shameful manipulativeness of the media. These details suddenly functionalize Allen's Eisensteinian insertion. Beyond his aesthetic tribute, he also gives his critical (parodic) acknowledgement of Eisenstein's theoretical postulates.

Moreover, having once seen Allen's bathetic paraphrase of Eisenstein's practice of montage, we are no longer able to perceive Eisenstein's hypotext, in Genette's classification, entirely neutrally. In other words, the hypertext has introduced a certain layer of meanings that was not present originally, but which once introduced, can no longer be disregarded. Clearly, then, the notion of influence is neither exclusively unidirectional nor hierarchical. In fact, it is this complexity of the mutual interaction between *a priori* paradigmatically separate texts on the axis of temporal synchronicity that gives impetus to cultural studies as an area of inquiry using the tools of interdisciplinarity.

The concept of influence actualizes another adjacent theme that is pertinent to any Woody Allen investigation, namely the complex relationship between "high culture" and "popular culture" in Allen's artistic paradigm. Naturally, the topic is multifaceted and merits a separate full-fledged inquiry. That is why, for the purposes of this discussion, my conclusions are intentionally limited to draw relevant parallels only between the Russian cultural situation and Allen's role in American culture. They are prompted by some common elements in the Russian and American identities, as has been argued both by Steiner and Chances. I am not invoking here some kind of subjective mysticism that foregrounds some kind of unique status for the Russian and

American "soul." Rather, the unifying component that puts the Russian and the American identities in a relation of kinship is their peripheral position with respect to Europe. This situation results in part in cultural marginalization and the need to legitimize the cultural production of the respective area. This circumstance underlies the view of the messianic role of the writer that has defined the function of the artist in Russian society and, while not as dominant, is still a cultural myth in contemporary, problem-ridden Russian society. By default and from a historical perspective, the cultural texts produced in these circumstances are perceived as instances of popular, rather than elite, culture.

Essentially, the great Russian realist tradition which stems from Pushkin, should be viewed as a form of popular culture. Many of Dostoevsky's novels, for example, were serialized and published weekly in newspapers and magazines; Chekhov was a regular contributor to various literary publications, etc. Yet, a certain degree of distinction can be attributed among these writers based on class belonging. Along these lines aristocrats such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, and Tolstoy moved in "high circles" while common folk such as Dostoevsky, Goncharov, Chekhov had a lower status. Naturally in the course of time and canonization their works have been reevaluated and reshuffled.

A superficial overview of the criticism on Woody Allen suggests the unequivocal nature of his art ranging from physical slapstick to sophisticated satire interspersed with intertextual allusions. One trend in Allen criticism identifies him solely in terms of his belonging to the strong wave of the Jewish comic tradition: Allen the *schlemiel*. Another trend discusses Allen against the backdrop of Chaplin, Keaton, and the Marx Brothers: Allen the slapstick comedian. Yet another views him as a brilliant prose humourist following in the footsteps of Mark Twain, Robert Benchley, and S.J. Perelman. As a *cinéaste*, he is undoubtedly the quintessential American *auteur*. Regardless of what framework one chooses to study him, Allen always emerges with his many-sided talents, his wit, and his acute cultural awareness. For a person with little formal higher education, Allen is perceived as an erudite. His earliest essays are already sophisticated parodies on authors and genres ranging from Raymond Chandler's and Dashiell Hammett's first-person crime narratives to philosophical treatises by Søren Kierkegaard.

As I have tried to demonstrate, the Russian layer of intertextuality is not only poetically present but ideologically relevant. To a certain extent, together with the Western existential philosophers, the Russian writers make up the foundation on which Allen builds his artistic world. While his invocation of these figures and texts in his works objectively makes them denser and more difficult to be grasped by the average member of the audience, I would claim that such an incorporation simultaneously has a counterdirected effect. In fact, Allen's carnivalesque "montagic" pasting together of cultural artefacts not only from different spatio-temporal frameworks but also from the domains of "high" and "low" culture, such as Tolstoy and the Marx brothers, ultimately results into a blurring of the boundaries between "high" and "low." The integration of a strong Russian cultural layer, incorporated in a typically American environment and problematics, gives a status of "high culture" to Allen's overall *oeuvre*. At the same time, Allen's synthetic approach to the Russian component as an organic part of the European repositions the Russian peripheral place within the global West-East centre/periphery paradigm. This recentering is all the more subtle due to Allen's farcico-parodical, and hence subversive, approach to any cultural quotation on the level of ideology, on the one hand, and his strictly pedantic appropriation of the formal parameters of these same models, on the other. The result is a post-modernist *bricolage* of generic forms and philosophical ideas which democratizes not only Allen's own creative production, but the canonized texts he engages in a Bakhtinian dialogue with, thus making them both equally accessible to the average reader/movie goer and the theoretically oriented scholarly *noyau*. In other words, Allen uses the artefacts of the Russian cultural tradition not only to legitimize his own art, but also to democratize, from the contemporary perspective, these representative products from the domain of high culture and bring them, by means of the carnivalesque, into the domain of popular culture.

While only the specialist of Slavics will probably be able to grasp all the references, explicit and implicit, pertaining to the Russian cultural *milieu*, the average viewer will certainly gain something by watching an hour and a half Allen movie while it is highly unlikely that *Crime and Punishment* will be his/her bedtime reading. And while it has been argued that Allen's audience is a small and select one, the very nature of the cinematic medium as the "popular" medium ensures Allen's greater advantages over his nineteenth-century Russian predecessors who tackle the cosmic issues of God and universe.

The high humanistic quality of the existential concerns of Russian literature provide Allen with an adequate framework in which he presents his artistic vision of our contemporary world by means of his synthetic reworking of Dostoevsky's crises, Tolstoy's conception of living the everyday as a source of happiness, mediated by Chekhov's quintessential discourse of modernity. Allen's later films of this decade, *Mighty Aphrodite* and *Everyone Says I Love You*, suggest an interesting movement in Allen's philosophical outlook. For lack of a better term, it can be called a "conservative" movement, not in a social but in an existential sense. The fragmentariness and refusal to provide clear answers about the possibility of human communication and love which underscore Allen's masterpieces of the 1970s such as *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan* have given way to a more optimistic view underlining that though we live in an immoral universe and death is the only constant, happiness is achievable, *pace* Tolstoy, through family and tradition. In that sense, Sander Lee is right in seeing Allen as a moralist.

According to Lee, with each new film Allen has been moving — philosophically, not socially — towards a more and more conservative vision. Having started with an almost proverbial sense of agnosticism, with *Mighty Aphrodite* Allen literally returns to the ancient Greek theatre and ideology with its sense of the inexorability of fate. From the point of view of poetics, the loose, fragmented, modernist structures of his early films more and more cede to a kind of an organic epic structure in his films of the mid-eighties. It is worth pointing out here that this movement parallels similar tendencies in Russian artists whose influence can be traced in Allen: not only literary figures such as Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, but also director Sergei Eisenstein who completes his own organic transformation in his last, unfinished epic ***Ivan the Terrible*** (1945-48).

As a conclusion I would like to add that in the course of my research I became more and more fascinated not only with my particular topic but with complex issues that such a cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary subject matter requires. I have probably failed to address all the problems that are pertinent to the area of intertextuality and cultural interaction. However, I hope to have been able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Woody Allen, with his, remains of the most challenging creative personalities who reflects the aesthetic and ethical concerns of our twentieth-century multi-faceted, complex human identity.

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The Laughmakers (untransmitted TV pilot; 1962)

Producer and concept: Robert Alan Arthur; Director: Joshua Shalley; Screenplay: Woody Allen; Photography: Don Malkames; Design: Albert Brenner; Music: Robert Prince; Editor: Ralph Rosenblum; Costumes: Larry Komiroff

Cast: Louise Sorel (Joyce); Paul Hampton (Ted); Sandy Baron (Danny); Louise Lasser (Susan); Alan Alda (Phil); David Burns (Sid)

Shown at the British Short Film Festival, London, 31 August 1995 (30 mins)

The Politics — and Comedy — of Woody Allen (original title: *The Woody*

Allen Comedy Special) (PBS, 1971)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Assistant Director: Fred T. Gallo

Intended as a spoof documentary, "The Harvey Wallinger Story," it was cancelled hours before air time on 21 February 1972. (60 mins)

My Favorite Comedian (1979)

Director: Woody Allen; Narration: Woody Allen, Dick Cavett.

Tribute to Bob Hope: a compilation of clips from 17 Hope movies between 1938-54. (63 mins)

The Subtle Concept (1980)

Director: Gérard Krawczyk; Screenplay: Gérard Krawczyk (based on Woody Allen's story, "Mr. Big"); Camera operator: Gérard Krawczyk; Photography: Giacinto Pizzuti; Design: Michel Vannier; Music: Max Steiner; Editor: Alberto Yaccelini. English track. 21 mins.

Cast: Allan Wneger (Kaiser Lupowitz); Rebecca auly (Heather Butkiss); Ed Marcus (Rabbi Weiman); Nicholas Bang (Pope); Daniel Crohen (Sgt. Reed); Pierre Benzrihem (Bartender); Patrice Richard and Jean G. Le Dantec (Bodyguards)

Two Mothers

An unfinished project of a documentary featuring Nettie Kongsberg and Maureen O'Sullivan. According to Mia Farrow, it never went further than the cutting room; for Tim Carroll "the motivation behind Woody's making of the documentary will remain a mystery" (qtd. in Fox 271)

2. Feature Films

What's New, Pussycat? (1965)

Director: Clive Donner; Producer: Charles K. Feldman; Screenplay: Woody Allen; Photography: Jean Badal; Music: Burt Bacharach; Editor: Fergus McDonnell; Sound: William-Robert Sivel. Art Director: Jacques Saulnier; Assistant Director: Enrico Isacco; Special Effects: Bob MacDonald; A Famous Artists Production

Cast: Peter Sellers (Fritz Fassbender); Peter O'Toole (Michael James); Romy Schneider (Carole Werner); Capucine (Renée Lefebvre); Paula Prentiss (Liz Bien); Woody Allen (Victor Shakapopolis); Ursula Andress (Rita); Edra Gale (Anna Fassbender); Catherine Schaake (Jacqueline); Jess Hahn (Perry Werner); Eleanor Hirt

(Sylvia Werner); Nicole Karen (Tempest O'Brien); Jean Paredes (Marcel); Michel Subor (Philippe); Jacqueline Fogt (Charlotte); Robert Rollis (Car Renter); Daniel Emilfork (Gas Station Attendant); Louis Falavigna (Jean, his friend); Jacques Balutin (Etienne); Annette Poivre (Emma); Sabine Sun (Nurse); Jean Yves Autrey, Pascal Wolf, Nadine Papin (Fassbender children); Tanya Lopert (Miss Lewis); Colin Drake (Durell); Norbert Terry (Kelly); F. Medard (Nash); Gordon Felio (Fat Man); Louise Lasser (The Nutcracker); Richard Saint-Bris (Mayor); Françoise Hardy (Mayor's Secretary); Douking (Renée's concierge)

What's Up, Tiger Lily? (1966)

Original version: *Kagi No Kagi (Key of Keys)*, Japan (1964)

Director: Senkichi Taniguchi; Script: Hideo Ando; Photography: Kazuo Yamada; Produced by Tomoyuko Tanaka for Toho

Rerelease director: Woody Allen; Production Conception: Ben Shapiro; Editor: Richard Krown; Script and Dubbing: Woody Allen, Frank Buxton, Len Maxwell, Louise Lasser, Mickey Rose, Julie Bennett, Bryna Wilson; Music: The Lovin' Spoonful

Cast: Tatsuya Mihashi (Phil Moscowitz); Mie Hana (Terry Yaki); Akiko Wakayabayashi (Suki Yaki); Tadao Nakamaru (Shepherd Wong); Susumu Kurobe (Wing Fat)

Don't Drink the Water (1969)

Director: Howard Morris; Producer: Charles Joffe; Screenplay: R.S. Allen and Harvey Bullock, based on the stageplay by Woody Allen; Photography: Harvey Genkins; Music: Pat Williams; Editor: Ralph Rosenblum; Art Director: Robert Gundlach; Assistant Director: Louis Stroller

Cast: Jackie Gleason (Walter Hollander); Estelle Parsons (Marion Hollander); Ted Bessel (Axel Magee); Joan Delaney (Susan Hollander); Richard Libertini (Father Drobney); Michael Constantine (Krojack); Avery Schreiber (Sultan)

Take the Money and Run (1969)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen and Mickey Rose; Photography: Lester Shorr (Technicolor); Editing: Paul Jordan, Ron Kalish; Music: Marvin Hamlisch; Art Director: Fred Harpman; Special Effects: A.D. Flowers; Assistant Directors:

Louis Stroller, Walter Hill; Produced by Charles H. Joffe for Palomar Pictures

Cast: Woody Allen (Virgil Starkwell); Janet Margolin (Louise); Marcel Hillaire (Fritz); Jacqueline Hyde (Miss Blair); Lonnie Chapman (Jake); Jan Merlin (Al); James Anderson (Chain Gang Warden); Howard Storm (Red); Mark Gordon (Vince); Micil Murphy (Frank); Minnow Moscowitz (Joe Agneta); Nate Jacobson (Judge); Grace Bauer (Farmhouse Lady); Ethel Sokolow (Mother Starkwell); Henry Leff (Father Starkwell); Don Frazier (Psychiatrist); Mike O'Dowd (Michael Sullivan); Louise Lasser (Kay Lewis); Jackson Beck (Narrator)

Bananas **(1971)**

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen and Mickey Rose; Photography: Andrew M. Costikyan (Deluxe Color); Production Designer: Ed Wittstein; Editor: Ron Kalish; Music: Marvin Hamlisch; Associate Producer: Ralph Rosenblum; Assistant Director: Fred T Gallo; Special Effects: Don B. Courtney; Produced by Jack Grossberg for Rollins and Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Fielding Mellish); Louise Lasser (Nancy); Carlos Montalban (General Vargas); Natividad Abascal (Yolanda); Jacobo Morales (Esposito); Miguel Suarez (Luis); David Ortiz (Sanchez); Rene Enriquez (Diaz); Jack Axelrod (Arroyo); Howard Cosell (Himself); Roger Grimsby (Himself); Don Dunphy (Himself); Charlotte Rae (Mrs. Mellish); Stanley Ackerman (Dr. Mellish); Dan Frazier (Priest); Martha Greenhouse (Dr. Feigen); Axel Anderson (Man tortured); Tigre Perez (Perez); Baron de Beer (British ambassador); Arthur Hughes (Judge); Jihn Braden (Prosecutor); Ted Chapman (Policeman); Dorthi Fox (J. Edgar Hoover); Dagne Crane (Sharon); Ed Barth (Paul)Nicholas Saunders (Douglas); Conrad Bain (Sample); Eulogio Peraza (Interpreter); Norman Evans (Senator); Robert O'Connel, Robert Dudley (FBI), Marilyn Hengst (Norma); Ed Crowley, Beeson Carroll (FBI security); Allen Garfield (Man on cross); Princess Fatosh (Snakebite lady); Dick Callinan (Ad man); Hy Anzel (Patient)

Play It Again, Sam **(1972)**

Director: Herbert Ross; Production Supervisor: Roger M. Rothstein; Screenplay: Woody Allen, based on his play; Photography: Owen Roizman; Music: Bill Goldenberg; Editor: Marion Rothman; Assistant Director: William Gerrity; Arthur P.

Jacobs Production for Paramount Pictures

Cast: Woody Allen (Allan Felix); Diane Keaton (Linda); Tony Roberts (Dick); Jerry Lacy (Humphrey Bogart); Susan Anspach (Nancy); Jennifer Salt (Sharon); Joy Bang (Julie); Viva (Jennifer); Suzanne Zenor (Discotheque girl); Diana Davila (Museum girl); Mari Fletcher (Fantasy Sharon); Michael Green, Ted Markland (Hoods)

Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex* (*but were afraid to ask) (1972)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen, based on the book by David Reuben; Photography: David M. Walsh (Deluxe Color); Assistant Directors: Fred T. Gallo, Terry M. Carr; Editor: Eric Albertson; Music: Mundell Lowe; Production Design: Dale Hennesy. Produced by Charles H. Joffe for United Artists

Cast: Woody Allen (Fool, Fabrizio, Victor, Sperm); John Carradine (Dr. Bernardo); Lou Jacobi (Sam); Louise Lasser (Gina); Anthony Quayle (King); Tony Randall (Operator); Lynne Redgrave (Queen); Burt Reynolds (Switchboard); Gene Wilder (Dr. Ross); Jack Barry (Himself); Erin Fleming (Girl); Elaine Giftos (Mrs. Ross); Toni Holt (Herself); Robert Q. Lewis (Himself); Heather Macrae (Helen); Pamela Mason (Herself); Sidney Miller (George); Regis Philbin (Himself); Titos Vandis (Milos); Stanley Adams (Stomach operator); Oscar Beregi (Brain control); Alan Caillou (Fool's father); Dort Clark (Sheriff); Geoffrey Holder (Sorcerer); Jay Robinson (Priest); Ref Sanchez (Igor); Don Chuy, Tom Mack (Football players); Baruch Lumet (Rabbi Baumel); Robert Walden (Sperm); H.E. West (Bernard Jaffe)

Sleeper (1973)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman; Photography: David M. Walsh (Deluxe Color); Editor: Ralph Rosenblum; Production Design: Dale Hennesy; Assistant Directors: Fred T. Gallo, Henry Lange, Jr.; Special Effects: A.D. Flowers; Music: Woody Allen with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra; Produced by Jack Grossberg for Jack Rollins and Charles Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Miles Monroe); Diane Keaton (Luna Schlosser); John Beck (Erno Windt); Mary Gregory (Dr. Melik); Don Keefer (Dr. Tryon); John McLiam (Dr. Agon); Bartlett Robinson (Dr. Orva); Chris Forbes (Rainer Krebs); Marya Small

(Dr. Nero); Peter Hobbs (Dr. Dean); Susan Miller (Ellen Pogrebin); Lou Picetti (Master of ceremonies); Jessica Rains (Woman in the mirror); Brian Avery (Herald Cohen); Spencer Milliagan (Jeb Hrmthmg); Stanley Ross (Sears Swiggles)

Love and Death (1975)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman; Photography: Ghislain Cloquet (Deluxe Color); Editing: Ralph Rosenblum, Ron Kalish; Assistant Directors: Paul Feyder, Bernard Kohn; Special Effects: Kit West; Music: Sergei Prokofiev; Art Director: Willy Holt; Costume Designer: Gladys De Segonzac; Produced by Charles H. Joffe for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Boris Grushenko); Diane Keaton (Sonia); Georges Adet (Old Nakhamkin); Frank Adu (Drill sergeant); Edmond Ardisson (Priest); Feodor Atkine (Mikhail); Albert Augier (Waiter); Yves Barasco (Rimsky); Lloyd Battista (Don Francisco); Jack Berard (General Lecoq); Eva Bertrand (Woman in hygiene play); George Birt (Doctor); Yves Brainville (Andre); Gerard Buhr (Servant); Brian Coburn (Servant); Brian Coburn (Dmitrii); Henri Coutet (Minskov); Patricia Crown, Narcissa McKinley (Cheerleaders); Henry Czarniak (Ivan); Despo Diamantidou (Mother); Sandor Eles, Aubrey Morris, Fred Smith, Bernard Taylor, Glenn Williams (Soldiers); Luce Fabiole (Grandmother); Florian (Uncle Nikolai); Jacqueline Fogt (Ludmilla); Sol L. Frieder (Voskovec); Olga Georges-Picot (Countess Alexandrovna); Harold Gould (Count Anton); Henry Hankin (Uncle Sasha); Jessica Harper (Natasha); Tony Jan (Vladimir Maksimovich); Tutte Lemkow (Pierre); Jack Lenoir (Krapotkin); Leib Lensky (Father Andre); Anne Lonnberg (Olga); Roger Lumont (Baker); Alfred Lutter III (Young Boris); Ed Marcus (Raskov); Jacques Maury (Second); Denise Peron (Spanish countess), Beth Porter (Anna); Alan Rossett (Guard); Shimen Ruskin (Borslov); Persival Russel (Berdykov); Chris Sanders (Joseph); Zvee Scooler (Father); C.A.R. Smith (Father Nikolai); Clement Thierry (Jacques); Alan Tilvern (Sergeant); James Tolkan (Napoleon); Helène Vallier (Madame Wolfe); Howard Vernon (General Levesque); Jacob Witkin (Sushkin)

The Front (1976)

Director/Producer: Martin Ritt; Script: Walter Bernstein; Music: Dave Grusin; Photography: Michael Chapman (Panavision Color); Art Director: Charles Bailey;

editor: Sidney Levin; Assistant Directors: Peter Scoppa, Ralph Singleton; Martin Ritt—Jack Rollins—Charles H. Joffe Production; Distributed by Columbia Pictures

Cast: Woody Allen (Howard Prince); Zero Mostel (Hecky Brown); Herschel Bernardi (Phil Sussman); Michael Murphy (Alfred Miller); Andrea Marcovicci (Florence Barrett); Remak Ramsay (Hennessey); Marvin Lichterman (Myer Prince); Lloyd Gough (Delaney); David Margulies (Phelps); Joshua Shelley (Sam); Norman Rose (Howard's attorney); Charles Kimbrough (Committee counselor); M. Josef Sommer (Committee chair); Danny Aiello (Danny La Gattuta); Georgann Johnson (TV interviewer); Scott McKay (Hampton); David Clarke (Hubert Jackson); J.W. Klein (Bank teller); John Bentley (Bartender); Julie Garfield (Margo); Murray Moston (Boss); McIntyre Dixon (Harry Stone); Rudolph Wilrich (Tailman); Burt Britton (Bookseller); Albert M. Ottenheimer (School principal); William Bogert (Parks); Joey Faye (Waiter); Marilyn Sokol (Sandy); John J. Slater (TV director); Renee Paris (Girl in hotel lobby); Joan Porter (Stagehand); Andrew and Jacob Bernstein (Alfred's children); Matthew Tobin (Man at party); Marilyn Persky (His date); Sam McMurray (Young man at party); Joe Jamrog, Michael Miller (FBI agents); Jack Davidson, Donald Symington (Congressmen); Patrick McNamara (Federal marshal)

Annie Hall (1977)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman; Photography: Gordon Willis; Editor: Ralph Rosenblum; Art Director: Mel Bourne; Animated Sequences: Chris Ishii; Assistant Directors: Fred T. Gallo, Fred Blankfein; Costume Designer: Ruth Morley; Produced by Charles H. Joffe for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions; Distributed by United Artists

Cast: Woody Allen (Alvy Singer); Diane Keaton (Annie Hall); Tony Roberts (Rob); Carol Kane (Allison); Paul Simon (Tony Lacey); Shelley Duvall (Pam); Janet Margolin (Robin); Colleen Dewhurst (Mom Hall); Christopher Walken (Duane); Donald Symington (Dad Hall); Helen Ludlam (Grammy Hall); Mordecai Lawner (Alvy's father); Joan Newman (Alvy's mother); Jonathan Munk (Alvy, age 9); Ruth Volner (Alvy's aunt); Martin Rosenblatt (Alvy's uncle); Hy Ansel (Joey Nichols); Rashel Novikoff (Aunt Tessie); Russell Horton (Man in theatre line); Marshall mcLuhan (Himself); Christine Jones (Dorrie); Mary Boylan (Miss Reed); Wendy

Girard (Janet); John Doumanian (Coke fiend); Bob Maroff, Rick Petrucelli (Men outside the theatre); Lee Calahan (Ticket-seller at theatre); Chris Gampel (Doctor); Dick Cavett (Himself); Mark Leonard (Navy Officer); Dan Ruskin (Comedian at rally); John Glover (Actor boyfriend); Bernie Styles (Comic's agent); Johnny Haymer (Comic); Ved Bandhu (Maharishi); John Dennis Johnston (Los Angeles policeman); Lauri Bird (Tony Lacey's girlfriend); Jim McKrell, Sarah Frost (Lacey's party guests); Vince O'Brien (Hotel doctor); Humphrey Davis (Alvy's psychiatrist); Veronica Radburn (Annie's psychiatrist); Robin Mary Paris (Actress in rehearsal); Charles Levin (Actor in rehearsal); Wayne Carson (Rehearsal stage manager); Michael Karm (Rehearsal director); Petronia Johnson, Shaun Casey (Lacey's dates at nightclub); Ricardo Bertoni, Michael (Waiters at nightclub); Lou Picetta, Loretta Tupper, James Burge, Shelley Hack, Albert Ottenheimer, Paula Trueman (Street strangers); Beverly D'Angelo, Tracey Walters (Stars in Rob's TV show); David Wier, Keith Dentice, Susan Mellinger, Hamit Perezic, James Balter, Eric Gould, Amy Levitan (Alvy's classmates); Gary Allen, Frank Vohs, Sybil Bowan, Margaretta Warwick (Teachers); Lucy Lee Flippen (Health food waitress); Gary Muledeer (Man at restaurant); Sigourney Weaver (Alvy's date outside theatre); Walter Bernstein (Annie's date outside theatre); Artie Butler (Annie's accompanist)

Interiors (1978)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon WIllis; Editor: Ralph Rosenblum; Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Assistant Director: Martin Berman; Costume Designer: Joel Schumacher; Produced by Charles H. Joffe for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions. Distributed by United Artists

Cast: Kristen Griffith (Flyn); Marybeth Hurt (Joey); Richard Jordan (Frederick); Diane Keaton (Renata); E.G. Marshall (Arthur); Geraldine Page (Eve); Maureen Stapleton (Pearl); Sam Waterston (Mike)

Manhattan (1979)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen, Marshall Brickman; Photography: Gordon Willis (black-and-white); Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Costumes: Albert Wolsky; Music: George Gershwin, adapted and arranged by Tom Pierson, performed by the New York Philharmonic, conductor Zubin Mehta, and the Buffalo Philharmonic, conductor Michael Tilson Thomas; Assistant Directors: Frederic B. Blankfein, Joan Spiegel Feinstein; Executive Producer: Robert Greenhut. Produced by Charles H. Joffe for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions. Distributed by United Artists.

Cast: Woody Allen (Isaac Davis); Diane Keaton (Mary Wilke); Michael Murphy (Yale); Mariel Hemingway (Tracy); Meryl Streep (Jill); Anne Byrne (Emily); Karen Ludwig (Connie); Michael O'Donoghue (Dennis); Victor Truro, Tisa Farrow, Helen Hanft (Party guests); Bella Abzug (Guest of honour); Gary Weis, Kenny Vance (TV producers); Charles Levin, Karen Allen, David Rasche (TV actors); Damion Sheller (Willie); Wallace Shawn (Jeremiah); Mark Linn Baker, Frances Conroy (Shakespearian actors); Bill Anthony, John Doumanian (Porsche owners); Ray Serra (Pizzeria waiter)

Stardust Memories (1980)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon Willis (black-and-white); Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Costume Designer: Santo Loquasto; Music: Jazz Heaven Orchestra featuring Joe Wilder, Hank Jones, Richie Pratt, Arvell Shaw, Earl Shendell, piano music arranged and performed by Dick Hyman; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Sandy Bates); Charlotte Rampling (Dorrie); Jessica Harper (Daisy); Marie-Christine Barrault (Isobel); Tony Roberts (Tony); Daniel Stern (Actor); Amy Wright (Shelley); Helen Hanft (Vivian Orkin); John Rothman (Jack Abel); Anne De Salvo (Sandy's sister); Joan Newman (Sandy's mother); Ken Chapin (Sandy's father); Leonardo Cimino (Sandy's analyst); Eli Mintz (Old man); Bob Maroff (Jerry Abraham); Gabrielle Strasun (Charlotte Ames); David Lipman (Sandy's chauffeur); Robert Munk (Young Sandy); Jaqui Safra (Sam); Sharon Stone (Beauty on train); Andy Albeck, Robert Friedman, Douglas Ireland, Jack Rollins (Studio executives); Howard Kissel (Sandy's manager); Max Leavitt (Sandy's doctor); Renee Lippin (Sandy's press agent); Sol Lomita (Sandy's accountant); Irving Metzman (Sandy's lawyer); Dorothy Leon (Sandy's cook); Roy Brocksmith (Dick Lobel); Simon Newey (Mr. Payson); Victoria Zussin (Mrs. Payson); Frances Pole (Libby);

Judith Roberts, Marie Lane (Singers); Noel Behn (Doug Orkin); Candy Loving (Tony's girlfriend); Benjamin Rayson (Dr. Paul Pearlstein); Mary Mims (Claire Schaeffer); Charles Lowe (Vaudeville singer); Joseph Summo (Hostility); Victor Truro (Hostility psychoanalyst); Judith Cohen, Madeline Moroff, Maureen P. Levins (Friends of Sandy's sister); E. Brian Dean (Police Sargent); Marvin Peisner (Ed Rich); Phillip Lenowsky (Assassin); Vanina Holasek, Michel Touchard (Isobel's children); Kenny Vance, Iryn Steinfink (New studio executives); Frank Modell (Rewrite man); Anne Korzen, Eric Van Valkenburg (People in ice-cream parlour); Susan Ginsburg (Usherette); Wade Barnes (Astrologer); Alice Spivak (Nurse); Armin Shimerman, Edith Grossman, Jacqueline French (Eulogy audience); John Doumanian (Armenian fan); John Hollander (Police arresting Sandy)

A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy **(1982)**

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon Willis. Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Costume Designer: Santo Loquasto; Animation Effects: Kurtz and Friends, Zander's Animation Parlour; Inventions: Eoin Sproutt Studio; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Andrew Hobbs), Mia Farrow (Ariel Weymouth); José Ferrer (Professor Leopold Sturgis); Julie Hagerty (Dulcy Ford); Tony Roberts (Dr. Maxwell Jordan); Mary Steenburgen (Adrian Hobbs); Adam Redfield (Student Foxx); Moishe Rosenfield (Mr. Hayes); Timothy Kenkins (Mr. Thomson); Michael Higgins (Reynolds); Sol Frieder (Carstairs); Boris Zoubok (Purvis); Thomas Barbour (Blint); Kate McGregor-Stewart (Mrs. Baker)

Zelig **(1983)**

Director: Woody Allen; Scripts: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon Willis (black-and-white); Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Costume Designer: Santo Loquasto; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Music: Dick Hyman; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Leonard Zelig); Mia Farow (Dr. Eudora Fletcher); John Buckwalter (Dr. Sindell); Marvin Chatinover (Glandular diagnosis doctor); Stanley Swerdlow (Mexican food doctor); Paul Nevens (Dr. Birsky); Howard Erskine

(Hypodermic doctor); George Hamlin (Experimental drugs doctor); Ralph Bell, Richard Whiting, Will Hussong (Other doctors); Robert Iglesia (Man in barber's chair); Eli Resnick (Man in park); Edward McPhillips (Scotsman); Gale Hansen, Michael Jeeter (Students); Peter McRobbie (Worker's rally speaker); Sol Lomita (Martin Geist); Marie Louise Wilson (Sister Ruth); Alice Beardsley (Telephone operator); Paula Trueman, Ed Lane (People on telephone); Marianne Tatum (Actress Fletcher); Charles Denny (Actor doctor); Michael Kell (Actor Koslow); Garrett Brown (Actor Zelig); Sharon Farroll (Miss Baker); Richard Litt (Charles Koslow); Dimitri Vassilopoulos (Martinez); John Rothman (Paul Deghuee); Stephanie Farrow (Maryl Fletcher, Eudora's sister); Francis Beggins (City Hall speaker); Jean Trowbridge (Eudora's mother); Deborah Rush (Lita Fox); Stanley Simmons (Zelig's lawyer); Jeanine Jackson (Helen Gray); Erma Campbell (Zelig's wife); Anton Marco (Wrist victim); Louise Deitch (House-painting victim); Bernice Dowis (Vilification woman); John Doumanian (Waiter); Will Holt (Rally chancellor); Susann Sontag, Irving Howe, Saul Bellow, Bricktop, Bruno Bettleheim, John Morton Blum (Themselves in contemporary interviews); Ellen Garrison (Older Eudora Fletcher); Sherman Loud (Older Paul Deghuee); Elizabeth Rotschild (Older Meryl Fletcher); Patrick Horgan (Narrator); Ed Herlihy, Dwight West, Gordon Gould, Windy Craig, Jurgen Kuehn (Announcers)

Broadway Danny Rose (1984)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon Willis; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Mel Bourne; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Music: Dick Hyman; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Danny Rose); Mia Farrow (Tina Vitale); Nick Apollo Forte (Lou Canova); Sandy Baron, Corbett Monica, Jackie Gayle, Morty Gunty, Will Jordan, Howard Storm, Jack Rollins, Milton Berle, Joe Franklin, Howard Cosell (Themselves); Craig Vandenburgh (Ray Webb); Herb Raynolds (Barney Dunn); Paul Greco (Vito Rispoli); Frank Renzulli Joe Rispoli); Edwin Bordo (Johnny Rispoli); Gina DeAngelis (Johnny's mother); Peter Castellotti (Warehouse hood); Sandy Richman (Teresa); Gerald Schoenfeld (Sid Bacharach); Olga Barbato (Angelina);

David Kissel (Phil Chomsky); Gloria Parker (Water glass virtuoso) Bob and Etta Rollins (Ballon act); Bob Weil (Herbie Jayson); David Kierserman (Ralph); Mark Hardwick (Blind xylophonist); Alba Ballard (Bird lady); Maurice Shrog (Hypnotist); Belle Berger (Lady in trance); Herschel Rosen (Husband of lady in trance); Maggie Ranone (Lou's daughter); Charles D'Amodio (Lou's don); Joie Gallo (Angelina's assistant); Carl Pistilli (Tommy's brother); Lucy Iacono (Tommy's mother); Tony Turca (Rocco); Gilda Torterello (Annie); Ronald Maccone (Vincent); Dom Matteo (Carmine); John Doumanian (Waldorf manager); Gary Reynolds (Manager's friend); Camille Saviola, Sheila Bond, Betty Rosotti (Party guests); Diane Zolten, William Paulson, George Axler (Fans); Leo Steiner (Deli owner)

The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Gordon Willis; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Stuart Wurtzel; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Music: Dick Hyman; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Mia Farrow (Cecilia); Jeff Daniels (Tom Baxter, Gil Shepard); Danny Aiello (Monk); Irving Metzman (Theatre manager); Stephanie Farrow (Cecilia's sister); David Kieserman (Diner boss); Elaine Grollman, Victoria Zussin, Mark Hammond, Wade Barnes, Joseph G. Graham, Don Quigley, Maurice Brenner (Diner patrons); Paul Herman, Rick Petrucelli, Peter Castellotti (Penny pitchers); Tom Degidon (Ticket taker); Milton Seaman, Mimi Weddell (Ticket buyers); Mary Hedahl (Popcorn vendor); Ed Herrman (Henry); Andrew Murphy, Thomas Kubiak (Policemen); John Wood (Jason); Deborah Rush (Rita); Van Johnson (Larry); Zoe Caldwell (Countess); Eugene Anthony (Arturo); Ebb Miller (Bandleader); Karen Akers (Kitty Haynes); Annie Joe Edwards (Delilah); Milo O'Shea (Father Donnelly); David Tice (Waiter); James Lynch (Maître d'); Peter McRobbie (Communist); Camille Saviola (Olga); Juliana Donald (Usherette); Dianne Wiest (Emma); Alexander Cohen (Raoul Hirsch); John Rothman (Hirsch's lawyer); Michael Tucker (Shepard's agent); Glenne Headley, Willie Tjan, Lela Levy, Drinda LaLumia (Hookers); Loretta Tupper (Music store owner); Raymond Serra (Hollywood executive); Sydeney Blake (*Variety* reporter)

Hannah and Her Sisters (1986)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo DiPalma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Stuart Wurtzel; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Mickey Sachs, Narrator); Michael Caine (Elliot); Mia Farrow (Hannah); Carrie Fisher (April); Barbara Hershey (Lee); Lloyd Nolan (Evans); Maureen O'Sullivan (Norma); Daniel Stern (Dusty); Max von Sydow (Frederick); Dianne Wiest (Holly); Sam Waterston (David); Tony Roberts (Mickey's ex-partner); Lewis Black (Paul); Julia Louis-Dreyfus (Mary); Christian Clemenson (Larry); Julie Kavner (Gail); J.T. Walsh (Ed Smythe); John Torturro (Writer); Rusty Magee (Ron); Allen and Artie DeCheser (Hannah's twins); Daisy Previn and Moses Farrow (Hannah's children); Ira Wheeler (Dr. Abel); Richard Jenkins (Dr. Wilkes); Tracy Kennedy (Brunch guest); Fred Melamed (Dr. Grey); Benno Schmidt (Dr. Smith); Joanna Gleason (Carol); Maria Chiara (Manon Lescaut); Paul Bates (Theatre manager); Carotte Pappas and Mary Pappas (Theatre executives); Bernie Leighton (Audition pianist); Ken Costigan (Father Flynn); Helen Miller (Mickey's mother); Leo Postrel (Mickey's father); Susan Gordon-Clark (Hostess); William Sturgis (Elliot's analyst); Daniel Haber (Krishna); Verna Hobson (Mavis); Ivan Kronefeld (Lee's husband); John Doumanian, Fletcher Previn, Irwin Tenenbaum, Amy Greenhill, Dickson Shaw, Marje Sheridan, Marybeth Hurt (Thanksgiving guests)

Radio Days (1987)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo DiPalma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Music: Dick Hyman (ALSO Bumblebee); Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Seth green (Little Joe); Julie Kavner (Mother) Michael Tucker (Father);Josh Mostel (Uncle Abe); Renee Lippin (Aunt Gail) William Magerman (Grandpa); Leah Carrey (Grandma); Joy Newman (Ruthie); Mia Farrow (Sally White); Julie Kurnitz (Irene); David Warrilow (Roger Daly);Wallace Shawn (Masked Avenger); Dianne Wiest (Aunt Bea); Kenneth Mars (Rabbi Baumel); Jeff Daniels (Biff Baxter); Danny

Aiello (Rocco); Gina DeAngelis (Rocco's mother); Tony Roberts ("Silver Dollar" emcee); Diane Keaton (New Year's singer); Guy LeBow (Bill Kern); Marc Colner (Whiz kid); Richard Portnow (Sy); Roger Hammer (Richard); Mike Starr, Paul Herman (Burglars); Don Pardo ("Guess that Tune" host); Martin Rosenblatt (Mr. Needleman); Helen Miller (Mrs. Needleman); Danielle Ferland (Child star); William Flanagan (Avenger announcer); Hy Anzell (Mr. Waldbaum); Fletcher Farrow Previn (Andrew); Mindy Morgenstern ("Show and tell" teacher); Andrew Clark (Sidney Manulis); Tito Puente (Latin bandleader); Deise Dummont (Communist's daughter); Belle Berger (Mrs. Silverman); Brian Mannain (Kirby Kyle); Stan Burns (Ventriloquist); Todd Field (Crooner); Peter Lombard (Abercrombie host); Martin Sherman (Mr. Abercrombie); Roberta Bennett (Teacher with carrot); J.R. Horne (Biff announcer); Sydney Blake (Miss Gordon); Kitty Carlisle Hart (Radio singer); Ivan Kronenfeld (On-the-spot newsman); Frank O'Brien (Fireman); Yolanda Childress (Polly's mother); Greg Almquist, Jackson Beck, Wendell Craig, W.H. Macy, Ken Roberts, Norman Rose, Kenneth Welsh (Radio Voice); Woody Allen (Narrator)

September **(1987)**

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo DiPalma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Denholm Elliot (Howard); Dianne Wiest (Stephanie); Mia Farrow (Lane); Elaine Stritch (Diane); Sam Waterston (Peter); Jack Warden (Lloyd); Ira Wheeler (Mr. Raines); Jane Cecil (Mrs. Raines); Rosemary Murphy (Mrs. Mason)

[Original cast: Christopher Walken/Sam Shepard (Peter); Maureen O'Sullivan (Diane); Charles Durning (Howard); Denholm Elliot (Lloyd)]

King Lear **(1987)**

Director: Jean-Luc Godard; Script: Jean-Luc Godard

Cast: Peter Sellars (stage director); Molly Ringwald (Cordelia); Burgess Meredith (Lear); Jean-Luc Godard (Lear); Norman Mailer (himself); Kate Miller (herself); Leos Carax (himself); Woody Allen (himself)

Another Woman (1988)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Sven Nykvist; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Gena Rowlands (Marion); Mia Farrow (Hope); Ian Holm (Ken); Blythe Danner (Lydia); Gene Hackman (Larry); Betty Buckley (Kathy); Martha Plimpton (Laura); John Houseman (Marion's father); David Ogden Stiers (Young Marion's father); Sandy Dennis (Claire); Philip Bosco (Sam); Harris Yulin (Paul); Frances Conroy (Lynn); Kenneth Welsh (Donald); Bruce Jay Friedman (Mark); Bernie Leighton (Piano Player); Jack Gelber, John Schenk (Birthday party guests); Michael Kirby (Psychiatrist); Noel Behn, Gretchen Dahm, Janet Frank, Dana Ivey, Fred Melamed, Alice Spivak (Engagement party guests); Mary Laslo (Clara); Carol Schultz (Young Clara); Dax Munna (Little Paul); Heather Sullivan (Little Marion); Margaret Marx (Young Marion); Jennifer Lynn McComb (Young Claire); Caroline McGee (Marion's mother); Stephen Mailer (Young Paul); Jacques Levy (Jack); Dee Dee Friedman (Waitress); Josh Hamilton (Laura's boyfriend); Kathryn Grody (Cynthia Franks); John Madden Towey (Waiter); Fred Sweda (Tom Banks); Jill Whitaker (Eleanor Banks)

"Oedipus Wrecks" (in *New York Stories*) (1989)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Sven Nykvist; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Sheldon Mills); Mia Farrow (Lisa); Julie Kavner (Treva); Mae Questel (Mother); George Schindler (Shandu the Magician); Marvin Chatnover (Psychiatrist); Ira Wheeler (Mr. Bates); Molly Regan (Sheldon's secretary); Jesse Keosian (Aunt Ceil); Bridget Ryan (Rita); Joan Bud (Board memeber); Paul Herman (Detective Flyn); Andrew MacMillan (Newscaster); Paul Herman (Detective Flynn); Jodi Long, Nancy Giles (TV interviewers); Mayor Edward I. Koch (Himself); Mike Starr, Richard Grund (Workmen); Herschel Rosen (Store Clerk); Michael Rizzo

(Waiter), Larry David (Theatre manager); Lola André, Martin Rosenblatt, Helen Hanft, Annie-Joe, Ernst Muller, Adele French, Selma Hirsch, Briz, Lou Ruggiero, Elana Cooper (Citizens)

Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Sven Nykvist; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Caroline Aaron (Barbara); Alan Alda (Lester); Woody Allen (Cliff Stern); Claire Bloom (Miriam Rosenthal); Mia Farrow (Halley Reed); Joanna Gleason (Wendy Stern); Anjelica Huston (Dolores Paley); Martin Landau (Judah Rosenthal); Jenny Nichols (Jenny); Jerry Orbach (Jack Rosenthal); Sam Waterston (Rabbi Ben); Martin Bergmann (Professor Louis Levy); Bill Bernstein (Testimonial speaker); Greg Edelman (Chris); Daryl Hannah (Lisa Crosby); Zina Jasper (Carol); George Mano (Photographer); Stephanie Roth (Sharon Rosenthal); Dolores Sutton (Judah's secretary); Joel S. Fogel, Donna Castellano, Thomas P. Crow (TV producers); Barry Finkel, Steve Maidment (TV writers); Nadia Sanford (Alva); Chester Malinowski (Hit man); Kenny Vance (Murray); Jerry Zaks (Man on campus); Stanley Reichman (Chris's father); Rebecca Schull (Chris's mother); David S. Howard (Sol Rosenthal); Garret Simowitz (Young Judah); Frances Conroy (House owner); Anna Berger (Aunt May); Sol Frieder, Justin Zaremby, Marvin Terban, Hy Anzell, Sylvia Kauders (Seder guests); Victor Argo (Detective Mike O'Donnell); Lenore Loveman, Nora Ephron, Sunny Keyser, Merv Bloch, Nancy Arden, Thomas L. Bolster, Myla Pitt, Robin Bartlett (Wedding guests); Grace Zimmerman (Bride); Randy Aaron Fink (Groom); Rabbi Joel Zion (Rabbi)

Alice (1990)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo Si Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Alec Baldwin (Eddie); Judy Davis (Vicki); Mia Farrow (Alice Tait); William

Hurt (Doug); Keye Luke (Dr. Yang); Joe Mantegna (Joe); Bernadette Peters (Muse); Cybill Shepherd (Nancy Brill); Gwen Verdon (Alice's mother); Patrick O'Neal (Alice's father); Julie Kavner (Decorator); James Toback (Professor); Caroline Aaron (Sue); Bob Balaban (Sid Moscowitz)

Scenes from a Mall (1991)

Director: Paul Mazursky; Script: Paul Mazursky and Roger L. Simon; Photography: Fred Murphy; Editor: Stuart Pappé; Production Designer: Pato Guzman; Costume Designer: Albert Wolsky; Produced by Paul Mazursky, Pato Guzman, and Patrick McCormick

Cast: Bette Midler (Deborah Fifer); Woody Allen (Nick Fifer); Bill Irwin (Mime); Daren Firestone (Sam); Rebecca Nickels (Jennifer); Paul Mazursky (Dr. Hans Clava)

Shadows and Fog (1992)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Kleinman); John Cusack (Jack); Mia Farrow (Irmy); Kathy Bates, Jodie Foster, Lily Tomlin, Anne Lange (Prostitutes); Fred Gwynne, Robert Silver (Hacker's followers); Julie Kavner (Alma); Madonna (Marie); John Malkovich (Clown); Kenneth Mars (Omstedt); Kate Nelligan (Eve); Camille Saviola (Landlady); Donald Pleasence (Doctor); Philip Bosco (Mr. Paulsen); Charles Cragin (Spiro); Robert Joy (Spiro's assistant); Wallace Shawn (Simon Carr); Kurtwood Smith (Vogel's follower); Josef Sommer (Priest); David Ogden Stiers (Hacker); Michael Kirby (Killer); W.H. Macy (Policeman); James Rebhorn, Victor Argo, Daniel Von Bargen (Vigilantes); Eszter Balint (Woman with baby); Rebecca Gibson (Baby)

Husbands and Wives (1992)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Gabe Roth); Blythe Danner (Rain's mother); Judy Davis (Sally);

Mia Farrow (Judy Roth); Juliette Lewis (Rain); Liam Neeson (Michael); Sydney Pollack (Jack); Lysette Anthony (Sam); Cristi Conway (Shawn Garinger); Timothy Jerome (Paul); Ron Rifkin (Rain's analyst); Jerry Zacks (Party guest)

Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut, Helen Robin, and Joseph Hartwick for Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Productions

Cast: Woody Allen (Larry Lipton); Diane Keaton (Carol Lipton); Jerry Adler (Paul House); Alan Alda (Ted); Lynn Cohen (Lillian House); Anjelica Huston (Marcia Fox); Melanie Morris (Helen Moss); Ron Rifkin (Sy); Joy Behar (Marilyn), William Addy (Jack the super)

Bullets over Broadway (1994)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen and Douglas McGrath; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut and Helen Robin for Jean Doumanian Productions and Sweetland Films

Cast: Jim Broadbent (Warner Purcell); John Cusack (David Shayne); Chazz Palminteri (Cheech); Harvey Fierstein (Sid Loomis) Marie-Louise Parker (Ellen); Rob Reiner (Sheldon Flender); Jeniffer Tilly (Olive Neal); Tracy Ullman (Eden Brent); Joe Viterelli (Jack Valenti); Jack Warden (Julian Marx); Dianne Wiest (Helen Sinclair)

Don't Drink the Water (made for TV, ABC, 1994)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen (from his play); Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Suzy Benzinger; Produced by Robert Greenhut for Jean Doumanian Productions and Sweetland Films

Cast: Woody Allen (Walter Hollander); Julie Kavner (Marion Hollander); Mayim Bialik (Susan Hollander); Michael J. Fox (Axel Magee); Dom De Louise (Father Dobney);Edward Herrman (Ambassador Magee); Josef Sommer, Austin Pendleton, John Doumanian, Erick Avari, Rosemary Murphy, Robert Stanton, Vit Horejs, Ed

Herlihy, Ed Van Nuys, Skip Rose, Leonid Uscher, Stas Kmiec, Sandor Tecsy, Brian McConnachie, Victor Steinbach, Frederick Rolf, Elizabeth de Charay, Taina Elg

Mighty Aphrodite (1995)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen and Douglas McGrath; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Produced by Robert Greenhut and Helen Robin for Jean Doumanian Productions and Sweetland Films

Cast: Woody Allen (Lenny); Helena Bonham Carter (Amanda); Mira Sorvino (Linda Ash); Michael Rappaport (Kevin); F. Murray Abraham (Chorus leader); Claire Bloom (Amanda's mother); Olympia Dukakis (Jocasta); David Ogden Stiers (Laius); Jack Warden (Tiresias); Peter Weller (Jerry Bender); Dan Moran (Ricky the pimp); Jeffery Kurland (Oedipus)

The Sunshine Boys (made for TV, CBS, 1996)

Director: John Erman; Script: Neil Simon (from his play); Produced by John Erman for Robert Halmi Sr

Cast: Woody Allen (Al Lewis); Walter Matthau (Willy Clark); Sarah Jessica Parker (Nancy Clark); Whoopi Goldberg (Nurse)

Everyone Says I Love You (1996)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Jeffrey Kurland; Executive Producer: J.E. Beauclaire; Co-Executive Producers: Charles H. Joffe, Jack Rollins, and Letty Aronson; Producer: Jean Doumanian; Associate Producer: Robert Greenhut

Woody Allen (Joe); Goldie Hawn (Frieda); Alan Alda (Bob); Julia Roberts (Von); Natasha Lyonne (D.J.) Drew Barrymore (Skylar); Edward Norton (Holden); Tim Roth (Charles Ferry)

Deconstructing Harry (1997)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Carlo Di Palma; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Suzy Benzinger; Executive Producer: J.E. Beauclaire; Co-Executive Producers: Charles H. Joffe, Jack Rollins, and Letty Aronson; Producer: Jean Doumanian; Co-Producer:

Richard Brick

Woody Allen (Harry Block); Caroline Aaron (Doris); Kirstie Alley (Joan); Bob Balaban (Richard); Richard Benjamin (Ken); Eric Bogosian (Burt); Billy Crystal (Larry); Judy Davis (Lucy); Hazelle Goodman (Cookie); Mariel Hemingway (Beth Kramer); Amy Irving (Jane); Julie Kavner (Grace); Eric Lloyd (Hilly Block); Julia Louis-Dreyfus (Leslie); Tobey Maguire (Harvey Stern); Demi Moore (Helen); Elisabeth Shue (Fay); Stanley Tucci (Paul Epstein); Robin Williams (Mel); Annette Arnold (Rosalee); Philip Bosco (Professor Clark); Stephanie Roth (Janet); Gene Saks (Harry's father)

Celebrity (1998)

Director: Woody Allen; Script: Woody Allen; Photography: Sven Nykvist; Editor: Susan E. Morse; Production Designer: Santo Loquasto; Costume Designer: Suzy Benzinger; Executive Producer: J.E. Beauclaire; Co-Executive Producers: Charles H. Joffe, Jack Rollins, and Letty Aronson; Producer: Jean Doumanian; Co-Producer: Richard Brick

Hank Azaria (David); Kenneth Branagh (Lee Simon); Judy Davis (Robin Simon); Leonardo DiCaprio (Brandon Darrow); Melanie Griffith (Nicole Oliver); Famke Janssen (Bonnie); Michael Lerner (Dr. Lupus); Joe Mantegna (Tony Gardella); Bebe Neuwirth (Hooker); Winona Ryder (Nola); Charlize Theron (Supermodel); Isaac Mizrahi, Mark Vanderloo (Friends of supermodel); Patti D'Arbanville (Iris); Gretchen Mol (Darrow's girlfriend); Greg Mottola (Director); Dylan Baker (Priest at Catholic retreat); Andre Gregory (John Papadakis); Robert Cuccioli (Monroe Gordon); Irina Pantaeva, Frederique Van Der Wal, Anthony Mason, Donald Trump, Celia Western, Jeffrey Wright, Karen Duffy, Kate Burton, Mary Jo Buttafuouco, Joey Buttafuouco, Allison Jannez, Aida Turturro, Vanessa Rdegrave; Becky Ann Barker, Saffron Burrows; Alfred Molina, Jim Moody, Debra Messing (Themselves); Bernard K. Addison (Minister Polynice); William Addy (Klnasman); Neal Arluck, Michael Grecco, Joseph Tudisco, Timothy Jerome (Hotel clerks); Ethan Aronoff (Boxing fan); Lorri Bagley (Chekhov-style writer); Gerry Becker (Jay Tepper); Arthur Berwick, Peter Boyden, Peter McRobbie (Father Gladen's fans); Vladimir Bibic (Director of photography); Angel Caban (Limo driver); Peter Castellotti (Sound recordist); New

York Joe Catalfumo (Steven DiDio); Robert Cividanes,Victor Colicchio, Tony Darrow, Donald Fitzgerald, Rick Mowat (Moving men); Ray Cohen (Pianist at wedding); John Costelloe, Steven Randazzo (Cops at hotel); John Doumanian, Adrian Grenier, Sam Rockwell (Darrow entourage); Kenneth Edelson (Rabbi Kaufman); Ned Eisenberg, Clebert Ford, Bruce Jay Friedman, Richard Mawe, Ted Neustadt (Elaine's book party guests); Howard Erskine (Senator Paley); Ramsey Faragallah (TV programme director); Bill Gerber (Waiting room patient); Ileen Getz (Alma); Bruno Gioiello, Matthew Sweeney (Skinheads); Wood Harris (Al Swayze); Reuben Jackson (Second examining room patient); Michael Kell (Nat); Surinder Khosla (V.J. Rajnipal); Kyle Kulish (Overweight achiever); David Marguiles (Counsellor Adelman); Jeff Mazzola (Assistant director); Patrick McCarthy (Klansman); Brian McConnachie (Exercise tape fan); Brian McCormack (Phil); Douglas McGrath (Bill Gaines); Steve Mellor (Eddie); Gabriel Millman (Camera operator), A. Lee Morris (Second assistant cameraperson); Larry Pine (Philip Datloff); Raplph Pope (Comic's agent); Francisco Quidjada (Erno Deluca); Frederick Rolf (Book reviewer); Skip Rose (Couple on beach); Adam Sietz (Vince); J.K. Simmons (Souvenir Hawker); Tony Sirico (Lou De Marco); Maurice Sonnenburg (Dalton Freed); Robert Torres (Security guard); Craig Ulmschneider (Production assistant director)

Antz (animated feature, 1999)

Director: Eric Dranell, Lawrence Gu; Dreamworks/PDI

Star voices: Woody Allen, Sharon Stone, Gene Hackman, Sylvester Stallone, Christopher Walken

IV.The Others about Woody Allen, the Artist

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Alley, Robert. *The Front* (novelization of screenplay). New York: Pocket Books, 1976.

Lahr, John. *The Bluebird of Unhappiness: A Woody Allen Review.* (dramatization of 18 stories and routines, presented at the Royal Exchange in Manchester)

2. *Films*

Woody Allen: An American Comedy. 1977.

Director: Harold Mantell. Films for the Humanities, Princeton, NJ; Woody Allen (narrator) (30 mins)

Film '78. 1978.

Introduction: Barry Norman; Presentation: Iain Johnstone; Script: Iain Johnstone; Presentation: Iain Jonhnstone; Series presentation: Barry Brown. BBC special.

Allen interview discussing the autobiographical elements of *Annie Hall*, his boycotting the Academy Awards, topics such as psychiatrists, Diane Keaton, Nixon, fame, sex. Clips from *Annie Hall, Bananas, The Front, Sleeper, Love and Death.* (30 mins)

Woody Allen (The South Bank Show). 1978.

Director: Alan Benson; Editor: Derek Bain; Producer: Alan Bain; Executive producer: Nick Elliott. LWT.

Melvyn Bragg interviews Woody Allen on *Interiors*. (50 mins)

To Woody Allen from Europe with Love. 1980.

Director: André Delvaux; Photography: Michael Badour, Walter Van Den Ende; Editors: Jean Reznikov, Annette Wauthoz; Music: Eghisto Macchi; Producers: Pierre Drouot, Daniel Van Avermaet; Iblis Film/BRt (Belgium). English track.

Delvaux's "Valentine" portrait to Allen revolves around the shooting and editing of *Stardust Memories*. Allen also discusses his work until that moment. (40 mins)

Meetin'WA. 1986.

Director: Jean-Luc Godard.

Encounter between Godard and Allen at the Manhattan Film Center, spring 1986. Companion piece to *Hannah and Her Sisters* at the Cannes Film Festival. Also shown at the Rotterdam Film Festival, 1988. (30 mins)

Woody Allen: Love, Death, Sex, and Matters Arising. 1987.

Producer: Margaret Sharp; Editor: John Lee; Script: Christopher Frayling; Presentation: Christopher Frayling. BBC special.

In-depth interview illustrated with clips and contributions from Allen and Tony Roberts, summing up their creative relationships and careers. (50 mins)

Mister Manhattan: Woody Allen.

1987. Director: Peter Behle; Photography: Peter Warneke; Editor: Ursula Dalchow; Producer: Katharina M. Trebitsch; On-line producer: Jutta Lieck. Trebitsch Produktion International GMBH/ZDF/ORF/CBS (Germany).

Hellmuth Karasek interviews Allen about his life and career with film clips. Illustrations of Allen playing the clarinet; shots of Manhattan Allen style. (50 mins)

Woody and Mia (Sixty Minutes). 1993.

Executive producer: Don Hewitt. Presenter: Steve Kroft. Editor: Esther Libertal. CBS News.

Allen gives his side of the scandal to Steve Kroft.

Woody Allen (The South Bank Show). 1994.

Director: Nigel Watts; Presentation: Nigel Watts; Editor: Gordon Mason; Photography: Les Young.Producer: Alan Bain; Executive producer: Nick Elliott. Carlton/LWT.

Melvyn Bragg interviews Allen on his career and directing style with emphasis on *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, as well as on the recent scandal. (50 mins)

Moving Pictures: Woody Allen. 1995.

Director: Saskia Baron, Richard Nash; Editor: Safi Ferrar; Series director: Saskia Baron; Series editor: Paul Kerr; Executive producer: Darlene Wolf. Barraclough Carey/BBC.

In a segment, Howard Schuman interviews Allen about the recent scandal and *Bullets over Broadway*.

Film '95. 1995.

Director: Liz Ekberg; Editor: Mike Jackson; Script: Barry Norman; Introduction: Barry Norman; Presentation: Barry Norman; Series producer: Bruce Thompson.

Interview with Allen. (30 mins)

***Wild Man Blues*.** 1997.

Director: Barbara Kopple.

Kopple follows Allen on a European tour with his jazz band and his new wife, Soon-Yi.

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